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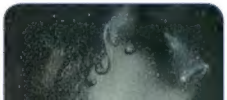

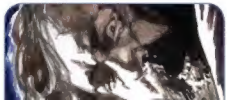

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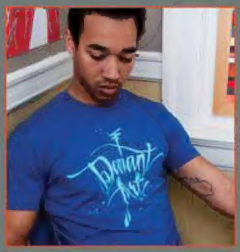

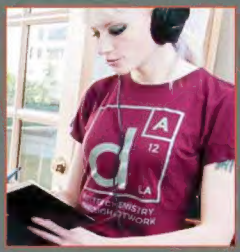

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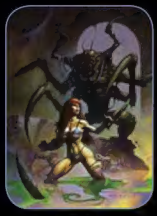

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Published six (6) times per year by Metal Mammoth, Inc., 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 • $21.95 paid annual subscription, $40.95 paid two year subscription, $53.95 paid three year subscription in territorial U.S. Add $19.00 per year for Canada and other foreign countries. Periodicals paid at Plattsburgh, NY and additional mailing offices. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Subscriber, please send change of address to Subscription Department, Heavy Metal Magazine, 116 Pleasant St., Easthampton, MA 01027 or e-mail change to heavymetal1@ren.com POSTMASTER: Please send change of address to: Subscription Department, Heavy Metal Magazine, 116 Pleasant St., Easthampton, MA 01027 ADVERTISING: Heavy Metal (413) 527-7481 CUSTOMER SERVICE: Heavy Metal, 116 Pleasant St., Easthampton, MA 01027 (413) 527-7481 • PRINTED IN THE USA

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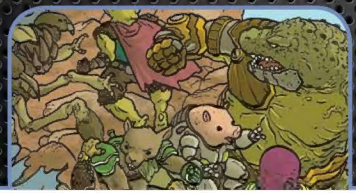

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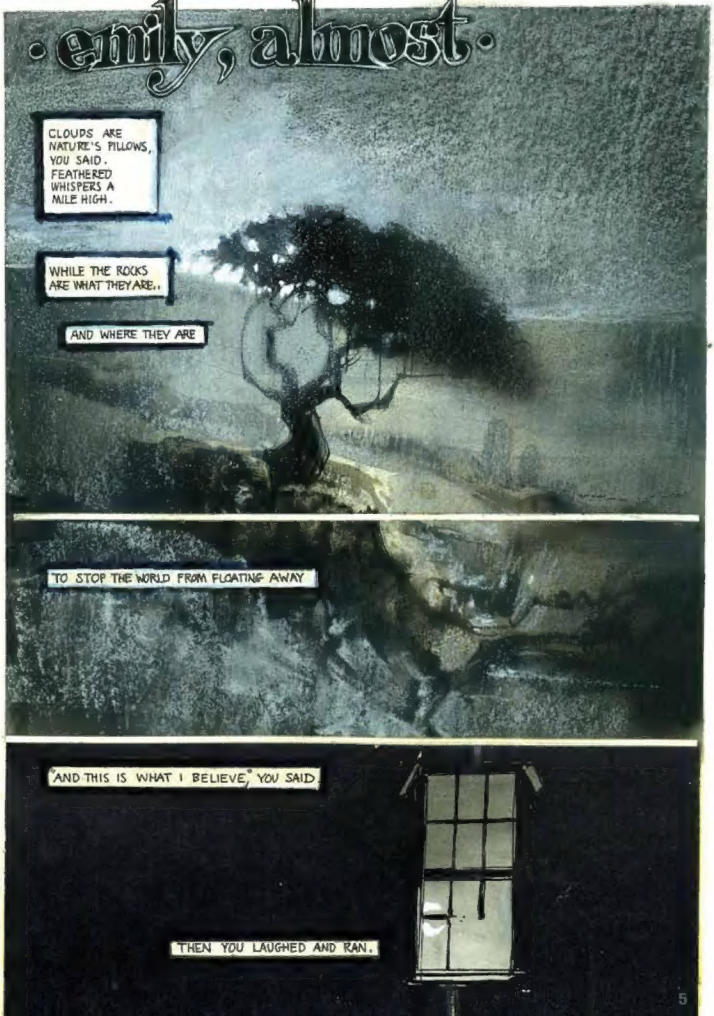
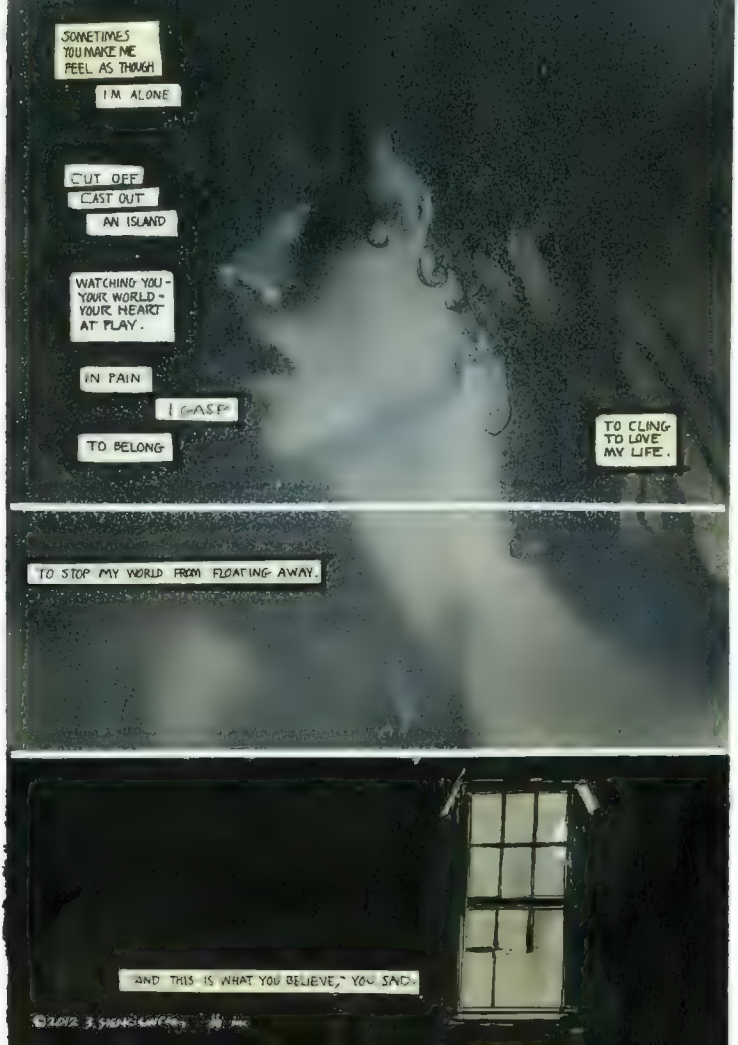

·emily, almost·
CLOUDS ARE NATURE'S PILLOWS, YOU SAID. FEATHERED WHISPERS A MILE HIGH.
WHILE THE ROCKS ARE WHAT THEY ARE,.
AND WHERE THEY ARE
TO STOP THE WORLD FROM FLOATING AWAY
"AND THIS IS WHAT I BELIEVE," YOU SAID
THEN YOU LAUGHED AND RAN.

BIRDS ARE NATURE'S THOUGHTS, YOU SAID, ALOFT ON WINGS OF DESIRE.
WHILE THE WINDS ARE WHAT THEY ARE...
AND WHERE THEY ARE
TO STOP THE WORLD FROM FLOATING AWAY
"AND THIS IS WHAT I BELIEVE," YOU SAID.
THEN YOU LAUGHED AND RAN.

RAIN IS VERTICAL WIND, YOU SAID, WET FROM A THOUSAND PILLOWS' TEARS.
WHILE THE TREES ARE WHAT THEY ARE...
AND WHERE THEY ARE
TO STOP THE WORLD FROM FLOATING AWAY
"AND THIS IS WHAT I BELIEVE," YOU SAID.
THEN YOU LAUGHED AND RAN.


SOMETIMES YOU MAKE ME FEEL AS THOUGH
I'M ALONE
CUT OFF
CAST OUT
AN ISLAND
WATCHING YOU - YOUR WORLD - YOUR HEART AT PLAY.
IN PAIN
I GASP
TO BELONG
TO CLING TO LOVE MY LIFE.
TO STOP MY WORLD FROM FLOATING AWAY.
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1] PUBLICATION TITLE: Heavy Metal . 2 . PUBLICATION NO. 379-970 [3.] FILING DATE: October 1 . 2012 . 4.] ISSUE FREQUENCY: 6x/year [5] NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY: 6 [6] ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: $21.95 [7] COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION . 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 CONTACT PERSON: Kevin Eastman TELEPHONE: 413-527-7481 [8.] COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICE OF PUBLISHER: 116 Pleasant Street Easthampton, MA 01027 :9] FULL NAMES AND COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR. Publisher: Kevin B. Eastman, , 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 EDITOR: Kevin B. Eastman 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 Managing Editor: Kevin B. Eastman, 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 [10.] Owner: Meta. Mammoth, Inc. 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 [11 . KNOWN BONDHOLDERS. MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS. MORTGAGES, OR OTHER SECURITIS Kevin B. Eastman, 116 Pleasant Street Easthampton MA 01027 12.] FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES: N/A 1.3] PUBLICATION TITLE Heavy Meta. . 4] ISSUE DATE FOR CIRCULATION DATA BELOW: May . 2012 15 EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION AVERAGE NO COPIES EACH ISSUE DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS 15a.] Total No Copies (Net Press Run.) 20,000 15b.) Paid Circulation .By Mail and Outside the Mail 1 1 . Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies) 0 [2] Mailed In -County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies .) 1 346 [3 Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS ? 500 4, Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mau Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mau) 278 . 15c.) Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b 1),(2),(3) and 4] 19,324 [15d.] Free or Nominal Rate Distribution By Mail and Outside .he Mail) . 1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County as Stated on PS Form 3541 0 (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541 0 (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail.) 0 (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means) 0 [15e.] Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d .) (2), (3) and (4) 0 [15f.] Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e) 19,324 g.Copies not Distributed 676 h.Total (Sum of 15f, and 15g) 20,000 i Percent Paid (15c/15f x 100) 100% The Statement of Ownership will be printed in the issue #266 of this publication.

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The Incendiary Truth of *Fahrenheit 451*

A review of Ray Bradbury's powerhouse novel.

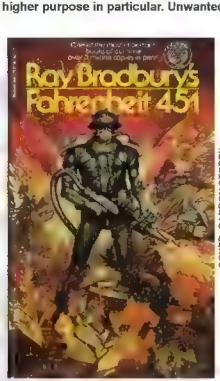
by Richard Caldwell

Expanding from a previous short story and since having seen life in a variety of other formats, from a film adaptation to radio dramas to theatrical performances and even a computer game, Bradbury's saga of the near-future totalitarian society observed in *Fahrenheit 451* was ironically intended as a statement concerning the effects that inundation of sensory overload in popular culture ultimately has on the population at large.

First published in 1953, *Fahrenheit 451* is the science fictional tale of Guy Montag, a firefighter, only in his world such an occupation exists not to extinguish flames, but to burn each and every prose work they come across, be it fiction or non, by mandate of law. In Montag's world, knowledge is not censored per se, but the ever-increasing demands of each new generation's ever-diminishing attention spans has backed culture into the corner where form is readily taken over substance, quantity over quality, and "how" the root question in basic education over "why". Though not immediately as nightmarish as better known works of dystopian literature such as *Brave New World* or *1984*, the implications are every bit as severe, if not moreso.

In a society where even the constantly-streamed entertainment only serves as commercials for yet more mindnumbing entertainment, Montag slowly begins to question the accepted logic of books, newspapers and magazines being a punishable offense. He befriends a neighboring teenage girl who is quirky and independent in her appreciation for nature, and the new relation outside of work or home inadvertently opens his eyes to other possibilities that life has to offer. However, her sudden departure from his life, coupled with witnessing the willing suicide of an elderly woman (which interestingly predates the fiery suicides in the real world of Buddhist monks protesting the Vietnam war), forces him to take an even harder look at himself and his worldview in the mirror. Gradually acknowledging the long dead coolness of his own marriage to a pill-popping drama whore arguably seals the deal. Soon, he is finding himself openly breaking laws which he had defended for years, finding some aid through a retired English teacher before being forced on the run.

The book's conclusion, while almost self-mocking, does offer a certain measure of hope down the road aways. And one can easily see how this narrative has since inspired later works, such as the more recent sci-fi movies *Equilibrium* (that movie where Bale's fight sequences alone would earn him the Batsy role) and particularly the ending of *The Book Of Eli*. The effect of the novel upon the rest of our modern culture, though usually overshadowed by the efforts of Huxley and Orwell both, can best be summarized in how the familiar to the world wide web "401 error" labels are in discussion of being changed permanently to "451", in respect of Bradbury's applications (as well as to commemorate the man's recent passing). Often touted as a work commenting on censorship, the real lessons learned are that in a consumerism-focused ethos, we do get what we ask for, even if such does not serve our aesthetic needs in general, or a higher purpose in particular. Unwanted circumstances are not always the result of whatever cloak and dagger dastardly malicious forces, sometimes it's nothing more than our own lazy unwillingness to read between the lines.



COVER: BARRON STOREY

Unlike the dark tomorrows presented within Huxley's *Brave New World* or Orwell's *1984* fictions, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* has already come to pass. In our march towards technological progress, we glue ourselves to the latest marvels while sacrificing our ability to relate to the flesh and blood people around us. Any efforts to resist the full embrace of the physical products of our times results in being ostracized by peers. The push for a digital life has already replaced in appeal the stoic evolution that comes from time clocked in with a good book. More people today have reposted LOL-filled short vids than participated in reading groups. Whereas onetime it was more common to snail-mail our written thoughts on paper to dear friends and family elsewhere, now we text-speak pop cultural references to virtual strangers via online communities, endlessly seeking amusement. But what price have we paid, are we paying, for the mindless hedonism? We "cliffs notes" our classics, we digest the past by way of abbreviated film variants that generally stray from the original intents. Children in the Western world rank lower and lower in standardized test scores globally, but by god can they work those first person zombie shooter games. Yet the ongoing push to be entertained, to adopt these high tech toys into our lives, has left us so drained creatively that we are compelled to return to the past again and again, for retro fashions and remixed songs and reimagined movies. Obviously, there was something deeper in the days long gone by that we as a society are lacking today.

Fahrenheit 451 is not about censorship, except possibly in the self-censoring that our growing need to be entertained has produced. But for a work of fiction, as with the irony of its multiple lives thus far presented in our culture, the book is itself an entertaining thing.

Dax Riggs Sings of Only Blood and Love

A bio of sorts for the in progress livelihood of musician Dax Riggs.

by Richard Caldwell

The lives and time of Dax Riggs are like an audio book version of an act of Anthropodermic bibliopegy. Generally mournful of the darkly grand death yet to come, his lyrics run the gamut from self-exploration to self-destruction and all four corners of the globe inbetween. His is a musical journey that apparently began as a 13-year-old runaway, fleeing an oppressive home for the promise of sonic venture in Florida. Eventually returning to Louisiana, he would go on to front the psychedelic death metal band Acid Bath (a name the members admit to stealing from another band), which in turn would garner a diehard cult following that persists roughly twenty long years after the fact, with damn good reason.

Though not the first band for most of its members, Acid Bath was where they all learned the ropes of creating songs and performing live for a scattershot range of venues, up until the verifiably tragic death of founding bassist Audie Pitre (and his parents) in a collision with a drunken driver in 1997. While it lasted, Acid Bath was a rock act experimental enough to boldly and completely change tempo mid song, while finding inspiration in sources as diverse as Norwegian black metal to the David Bowie/Iggy Pop symbiosis of the 1970s. They defined and redefined swamp rock, a name attributed to the New Orleans roots as much as to the dire murkiness of the sound itself. Late in Jimi Hendrix's own prolific but short career, he expressed great interest in developing a sub-genre that was like a proto-heavy metal rendition of the blues. Arguably, Black Sabbath was born from a similar pursuit. Acid Bath, young as they were, perfected this. Regardless, as the strong-willed members entered their soul-searching mid-20s phases, they elected to go their separate ways following the death of one of their own, with powerhouse guitarist Sammy Duet opening up to a devout Satanist belief structure (Southern boy that he is), and Dax seeing in himself a greater need to explore the boundaries of music itself.

I first encountered his music in 2000, when he was singing for his next major output, the short-lived and more melodic Agents of Oblivion. That Spring, my older sister Rebecca and her new boyfriend had mutually discovered the two albums of Acid Bath, and though I lived in New England at the time, my letters from her were filled with her amazement at their stylings and general aesthetic. On September 18th of that year, Rebecca was strangled to death by that boyfriend in her own bed. On the bedside table was her ancient boom-box, and inside was the first album from Acid Bath, *When the Kite String Pops*. I know, because days after the fact I came back to Kentucky to clean out her apartment. I kept the disc, and still have it in my possession. She was like me, in that we'd cycle through bands by playing albums, sometimes specific songs, ad nauseum. Before hitting the road as I often do, I had taught Rebecca how to read Tarot, major and lesser, and was shocked to later find her latest spiral notebook, filled with only two things. In the weeks leading up to her murder, she had been obsessing over the band more and more, while also performing weekly Tarot readings on both herself and the boyfriend. I still have the notebook in my possession as well. Like the album itself, it took me some years to truly digest. What struck me immediately though, were commonalities between this Acid Bath recording of a tune called "Like the Scream of the Butterfly", and the Tarot findings my sister transcribed, as well as her history in general. She herself never apparently saw the similarity, but subconsciously it would explain her intense attraction to the band. Every damned lyric of that song. As dark as was much of their subject matter, I wonder what spiritual elements were ultimately at play, as though it was recorded many years prior, the song very clearly portrays the exact murder of my big sis. After many solo drinking nights of dissecting the album, I confess I will never know whatever truth innuendoed by the strange coincidences. Eventually I moved back to the region and soon was befriended by a younger circle who themselves were earnestly befuddled and mesmerized by the work of Riggs, with comparably good reason. I won't say that I suspect the man is some demoniacal spirit damning our Earthly realm, but I do believe, with many years of troubled pondering, that the path he pursues is highly evocative of an almost shamanic series of rites, as he is clearly one who lives and breathes the pursuit of musical exploration, as evidenced by his borderline reclusive guarding of privacy. In the public domain he is a musician. I sincerely believe now, that privately, he is nothing more, nothing less. Creativity and mysticism are not too dissimilar, as best exampled by the great and powerful Alan Moore, who Riggs himself has named as influence (along with other writers of comic books such as Grant Morrison, Frank Miller, Neil Gaiman, and Clive Barker). In fact, I have a separate theory that his tune "Otherworldly Dreamer" is an ode to Mr. Moore, particularly with its mention of the mythic black dog. But I do digress.

As Riggs chased his own demons, covering musicians as diverse as Nick Drake and Leonard Cohen and even the Beatles for a variety of audiences big and small and festivals all over the states, he began to attain more notice for his longer effort of a group, Deadboy and the Elephantmen. Even Henry Rollins became a huge fan, gleefully promoting the efforts of Riggs and company on his radio program and his television series alike. Meanwhile, Riggs continued to play with other musicians as well, mostly in private, doing everything in his seeming power to learn from all that he encountered on his strange journey, as well as from the many legacies that came before. His sound diversified thusly, exponentially even, with strange mixes of punkabilly glam and Johnny Cash reborn, though still with verses that increasingly became closer to poetry than the typical lyrics found on the ever-bland American FM dial. In the rare interviews, he is torn between being openly distracted and exhibiting the attributes of one painfully awkward. Awkward perhaps, of being anywhere other than or doing anything other than making the next song. He flusters in conversation, which is actually a welcome thing from one who has birthed so many imaginative audio diatribes of a vast range of subject matters. He is a human being, sloppy and ill at ease. Unless of course, he has a guitar in hand or a mic within grasp. Then his ongoing journey of explorations asserts itself, and the demon unties itself from its chair to learn us all something proper indeed.

The last few years he has delved into more solo material, always experimenting, and yet always singing tidings of neither heaven nor hell. Few other musicians past or present have been as daring in their marriage of so many different genres, and few have remained so shy of the limelight despite their accomplished virtuosity. I once heard a DJ describe Tom Waits (another influence upon Riggs) as a rockstar for grownups. Whereas Waits is a self-mocking survivor of alcoholism, Riggs however, is Arthur Rimbaud (history's very first rock legend) born again. Fiery in spirit and ever wistful for things here and never here all at once, he does not exist in this world per se, only on our scratched up CDs and mixtapes left over by that one ex-girlfriend. And he would have it no other way.

THE MATRON

A tale from behind the fevered eye sockets of Richard Caldwell

I. She had been left well enough alone for such a long, long time.

She could always talk to the little roaches, and they would always talk to her. They taught her how to survive, as nobody else in the village would treat her as clansfolk of the ebony tribes.

Poor J'zelle, hunting her own scraps for food and softskins to wrap herself against the death-winds that made everything cold. The other children would throw rocks at her, and tease her for not having bloodmates like the rest. Her ma had died when she was little more than an infant; and the other children would tease J'zelle that her ma had lain with all the men in the clan like a mongrel. Her da had never been known; and though the other children would tease her over this, J'zelle always secretly believed this meant all men of the clan should be her da, since any of them could.

The little roaches were never mean to her. They and they alone would talk to her, comfort her. Not that there was much comfort in such a place, in such a life. The world was cold and merciless to poor J'zelle, but in her dreams was when she met with true terror. In her dreams she was often imprisoned by things not of this world, not of any world. In her dreams J'zelle understands even less than in the cold world of waking time.

Like so, she awakens screaming her little head off.

Laying along the village barrier comprised of giant old ribs caught from one of the giant old lizards that seem to come around less and less, J'zelle wakes with a stir, immediately dodging a bundle of sticks thrown her way to silence the girl. Scattering herself away from the mean old man and off into the trees, J'zelle sees her own freaky breath, feels the thundering rumbles in her chest, and tries to calm herself. The little roaches, crawling out from under her soft-skin rags, welcome her to the new morning. They see her of her dreams and she tells them. She tells them of a mountain built from nothing but countless snakes, all tied and knotted together, all squirming and hissing and making such a fright. As big was the mound of snakes towering before her, just as big was the hissing, til nothing else could be seen or heard or felt or anything. The world and the sky and the sea and all else had become the snakes, and all tied together. This was a hard thing for a girl to have to see. When the hisses began to make sense was when she pulled herself back into waking time.

The little roaches say to her, how on this morning she is now eleven years of age, almost as old as was her ma. And soon, say the little roaches to the girl, J'zelle will be a woman as well.

Puzzled at this, J'zelle scratches her head, because she knows not what questions to ask, and wanders off to dig up something to eat.

Days later, J'zelle creepy-crawls through the muddied snow, just as she learned from the little roaches. The star has set and the village fires are thrusting new light into the darkening skies. J'zelle creepy-crawls towards the warmth, creepy-crawls towards the fire-lights that make the night less scary. She has never been away from the village, though her dreams are scary enough to keep her away from unknown things, unknown places. On such evenings as this, when J'zelle can sneak close to her clansfolk unnoticed, she takes pleasure in hearing their tales.

They sing-speak of silly things and of sad things and of many things inbetween. They sing-speak of their elders and the elders before, of strange occurrences and stranger times when the village was a center of great activity and the cold death-winds were not an unending vex to all. The men of the village drink their firewater horns, and as the fire-lights grow dim the sing-speak grows into words she does not understand. Even the men of the village begin to show their fear, and all slowly stumble into the shelters of their heavily layered tents.

This night, however, poor J'zelle is heard by the others.

Drawing nearer to the center of fire-lights, J'zelle cuts her hand on a jagged ice crystal in the ground, and lets out a low, immediate howl. Rushing footsteps approach her, and she finds herself raised into the air like nothing at all, and now with too many eyes looking down on her, lifted though she is. The little roaches had also taught her panic.

"Little rat-beast! Little rat-beast want her bones cooked in the fires?" screams the man called Tamas. Tamas is always screaming his sing-speak, because he wants to be chieftain. J'zelle know that much. All knew that much.

J'zelle just wails.

"Little rat-beast! Why do you howl like a child? We know you steal food, little rat-beast!"

J'zelle wails some more, her empty stomach matching her tempo in a vocal duet. Until the fist smashes the side of her head. She falls hard onto the ice, leaving a mess of hair behind in the hands of Tamas. Surrounded by fellow drinkers of firewater horns, Tamas laughs proudly and loudly at his astonishing victory. J'zelle only falls further now, into dream and blackness.

II. Weeks later, J'zelle sits in the middle of a large field of ice, chipping a small hole into the ground with a sharpstone. She does this sullenly, as the little roaches look on. With the star high in the skies above, she begins to think of Tamas and of every other time she has been hurt, of the many things she has never understood of the world, of the bloodmates she does not possess. And of how Tamas watches her with that strange look in his eyes, though he is almost twice her age and certainly three times her size. The little roaches respect her silence, their chirping diminished to wind. The little roach on her cheek remains especially still. All is calm and quiet save for the chipping of sharpstone on ice.

J'zelle ceases her movement. She feels an emptiness in her far greater than the constant hunger, as though her airy shadow were hiding inside her belly. J'zelle grips the sharpstone tight, and cuts her forearm wide open. Blood droplets drip onto the ice around her as the sky begins to circle. She watches the bright warm lifewater falling from out her arm, and slowly feels her own eyelids falling low. The little roaches seem not at all surprised by such quiet violence.

Dreaming of great waves crashing, of many many stars in the sky, hours pass before J'zelle returns to the waking time. It is late in the night, so late that not one of the firelights can be seen across the field. Trying to sit up in the chilled night's air, there in the moonlight J'zelle finds shock. Her arm forgotten, she feels leagues of stabbing pain in her stomach, as though fire were surging out. J'zelle doubles over in agony, in tears. Far more blood had spilt from between her legs than the gash on her arm. Blackness again as the young woman faces new shock.

That was the night the world ended. She walked on in the next evening, stumbling through the snowdrift back through the village barrier, the sky full of black smoke from the fires, but no firelights she can see lighting up the night. Her head is woozy from the bloodloss, but the little roaches tell her where to put her foot, as they crawl about her coal black skin. The little roaches do not warn her about Tamas. Under the shadow of the giant ribs piercing the smoky air, he appears from nowhere, shoving her to the ground. That look she hates so much is in his eyes again, a sharpness as hard as his rough hands on her arms. His closeness betrays the smell of the firewater, and his grin reminds her of the snakes in her dreams. Swatting a couple of the little roaches from off her belly, Tamas says "You gross rat-beast, you think you have a place here? I will give you a place here, rat-beast." And with one hand pinning her two smaller hands above her head, he frees his tunic sash with his left, the grin deepening, the sharp of his eyes like a blade through the heavy wind. J'zelle shuts her eyes tight, to close off the world for good. As he enters her, she feels the bulk of the sharpstone rolled up in her own sash, and eases a hand towards it. Eyes still closed, the sounds of his animal grunts enveloping her ears, she plunges the small sharpstone into the side of his neck. He reacts fastly, clutching at the blood exploding from himself, trying feebly to catch the surging drops. He slaps her across her little face, failing to run away into the village. J'zelle opens her own eyes, and slowly picks herself up, the little roaches needing to tell her each and every movement to make, as her head is empty of word, like she is stuck in a nightmare again. Her rags torn, she holds herself while with unsteady footing trudges off to the nearest house to ride away. It is too cold for wetness to come from her eyes.

Hearing Tamas scream so loud pulls her back to coherence, and curious at what troubles her attacker has stumbled across, she creepy crawls towards the sound, hands digging into the snow and ice. Contorting through alleyways between the village huts, she sees Tamas on his knees and mortal wound forgotten, as he is hiding his face in the stomach of one of the tribal elders, hugging him so tight with both arms. Drawing nearer, J'zelle sees Tamas is not hiding, but eating, teeth gnashing as the scrawny gray man waves his arms frantically. J'zelle goes back to her shadow, knees pulled close, and stays up through the night hearing more screams, more and more screams. The little roaches tell her to rejoice, for now she is herself. J'zelle is too tired and confused and beaten to understand, but for some reason she feels a kind of peace. Before the sun returns to the sky, she is asleep.

The next few days are a strange time, for everybody in the village dies. Only, they get back up, some faster than others, and are so hungry that they do not notice J'zelle anymore. Maybe, she wonders, J'zelle am too skinny and have no meat to make them want to bite J'zelle like the others. Some of her tribe flee and she never sees them again, but of the many who stay and fight, none remain as they were. J'zelle, at first is frightened by the screams, by the fresh trails of blood she finds growing throughout the village and pieces of arms or legs here and there, but very quickly realizes her own safety, and the increasing ease to find her own food, and better wraps to shield herself from the cold. She makes new friends with the wolf-hounds, who lead the hunters to the pinky beasts as big as huts. The mice eat at each other, but not the wolf-hounds, who are grateful for her finding rats for them to feed upon. Sleeping with the wolf-hounds, all huddled together for warmth, J'zelle wonders. She does not feel a part of the tribe, though now instead of taunting her or beating her, they ignore her completely. Tomorrow, she tells the little roaches, tomorrow I will ask them why, as she drifts into dreams of better things.

III. It was four years before J'zelle left the village. It grew to be a happy time for her, the happiest she'd ever known, once she learned that the dead would leave her be for whatever reasons. She never could talk to them anymore, not like she could the little roaches, but an ennui grew and grew, as she saw a need to converse with others. Her body was developing, which J'zelle attributed to her not being kicked or having had rocks thrown her way in ages. The villagers, after many long and exciting months, had begun to whither, to stand idly with crazed looks on their rotting faces. As the seasons turned from icy death cold to freezing discomfort, their collective smell would be carried by the winds to whichever part of the village she then slept, constantly moving about from shear boredom. Some of the dead villagers had gone off and left, the ones who were not so wrecthed by the violence of their dying, but the ones who remained, were like shadows without movement. Gradually, eventually, even the wolf-hounds had wandered off one by one, to meet elsewhere.

J'zelle had thoughtfully wrapped the finest skins she could find for extra shielding from the frosted winds, and with a dried stomach-pouch from one of the hunters of the giant hairy wild beasts she had filled what meager dried meats she had taught herself to make. She knew of another village of the ebony tribes, farther to the West, with whom her people had often traded and so set this place as her destination.

The village, when she found her way there many days later, was a smoldering ruin, with bloodied bodies frozen in the ice, and more of the dead lingering about, just as in her own village.

Two long and hard years followed, with the little roaches telling her that seventeen turns of season cycles had passed since she came screaming into the world. Two long and hard years of wandering the ice lands, finding settlements that were either totally devastated by the dead, or locked up tight, with spears thrown at her when she tried to come near. Once, she came upon a smaller fishing village, on the coast to the south-east, where a young man and his younger brothers were bringing a wagon of fish home to the gates ahead. The eldest cursed at her, spitting on the ground between them in vex. "We know you... know the story of the black witch. Go away, death-bringer, leave us be." And with that, the first words J'zelle had heard spoken by a voice other than her own in many years, the woman turned and walked back into the wilderness, following the coastline.

She dreams of an ancient ebony face, more and moreso, with this time the face wanders out from shadows at last, and speaking to J'zelle. The ancient ebony face belongs to the oldest woman J'zelle has ever seen, so old her skin ranged and dry like the hardest of well-worn leathers of the elders of her once tribe. With tired eyes of solid blackness, the ancient ebony woman slowly raises a gnarled hand, clutching at the air of dream, to point a long and boney finger at J'zelle. In J'zelle's head she hears a voice like the scratching of cats, though the lips of the ancient woman move not. "You the first of the gypsy, matron of the world, you who were raised by roaches while spat upon and tasting booted heel in the days of your youth, you return the dead to the world of the living, and eneday, you will be truly dying!" Cackling heard so intense as to have flowing form all about her, J'zelle responds, shouting though her own dream lips are not moving either.

"You are crazy! How could J'zelle do such things? J'zelle is without bloodmates, without home. J'zelle's only friends are the little roaches, so what man would ever rescue her? J'zelle is not terrifying, J'zelle is alone, always alone." More cackles, growing into a thunder rolling. "You of the always alone, you I know well, for you am I!"

And J'zelle is thrown awake, the round white face that watches over the night in the middle of the sky, the little roaches eager to comfort her as her skin wraps are drenched in sweat. The little roaches, scurrying through her hair, calming while leaving warning...strangers approach.

Creepy-crawling as she often does, she moves the waters, coming closer and closer to indiscriminate voices. Many men, garbed in strange skins with belts and tunics adorned in polished bone so shiny, a boat behind them. And further back in the waters, a boat bigger than any fishing boat J'zelle had ever seen. Curious, she rises and walks slowly to the strange men in the quiet night.

Forgetting herself, J'zelle welcomes this new life, onboard a mighty boat. The men go from many shores to many more strange shores, of the mainland and islands far removed of which J'zelle had only heard vague singsong stories by the firelights of her tribe's eves. The men are happy to have a young woman, willing to lay with in turn for food. Grateful to hear the voices of others, she mimicks the words of their unknown language, eventually learning meanings to some. They do not beat her, not as much as the members of her once tribe. Adventure has taken hold of the life of J'zelle as she welcomes this new path, impossibly hard though it may be.

Only, some of the men are getting sick, and some others are becoming weary of J'zelle already, though only a year at sea. But the little roaches tell J'zelle to worry not. The little roaches say the path is true and inescapable, as true and inescapable as death. And J'zelle sees comfort in this. J'zelle still dreams of the ancient ebony woman, who talks much sweeter to J'zelle now. The old hag tells her many stories by dream, many tales of things yet to be. J'zelle, hardened by her many-year journey, begins to see comfort in this as well.

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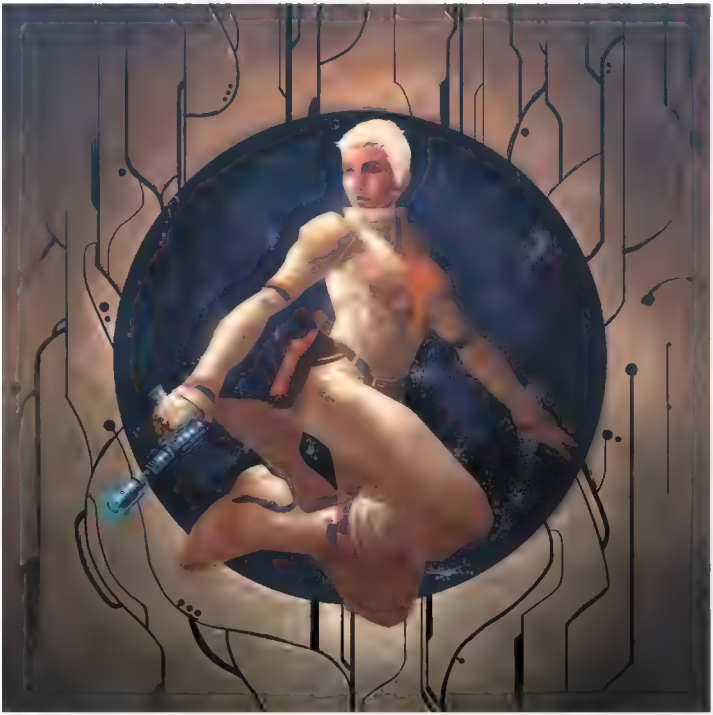

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- **changing mind**

ROOF TOP OF SOME
BOMBED RESTAURANT
MY NAME IS ——— AND TONIGHT I'M GOING TO SAVE THE WORLD
EEEE-- DOT CAN YOU HEAR ME?
WON'T BE MY FIRST TIME NOR WILL IT BE MY LAST
EEEE--WHERE ARE YOU? WE'RE READY
TONIGHT'S HIGH THREAT LEVEL IS COMING FROM AARON CHEF THE IRON, MY OLD NEMESIS
URANT RESTAU
TARGET IS HIDING DOWN THERE, PROBABLY SLAVING OVER HIS NEWEST DOOMSDAY DEVICE
OI, WHERE DA BLOODY-- HORROR--AER YEH, AUNT 'N JERRY!
MY TEAM WANTED TO COME ALONG BUT I ORDERED THEM TO SIT TIGHT
YOU'RE BREAKING UP--EEEEE
THEY'RE ONLY GOING TO SLOW ME DOWN. I WORK BETTER, FASTER WHEN I'M ALONE
GET IN. TAKE OUT THE CHEF. GET OUT
THAT'S A JOB FOR THE WORLD'S BEST SECRET AGENT. A JOB FOR ME
SIR MONDAY
THIS IS MONDAY. I'M IN. I'LL BE OUTTA HERE IN NO TI--

!!
LA MORT!
GARZONES! TOZZ 'IM INTO ZE BLENDER!
OUI, CHEF.
HOHOHO!
PEE-TEE-FUL SKUNK. YOU TINK I WOULDN'T NOTICE YOU CREEPING IN MOI CUISINE?
IZ TIMING COULDN'T BE MORE REAL. NOW I AVE ZE MOST CRUCIAL INGREDIENT I NEED TO COMPLETE ZE EXPERIMENT..
ZE FLESH AND BLOOD OF MY ADVERSAIRE
BUT 'ZIS RATS, ZEY NEVER COME ALONE SOON ZEY WILL COME CRAWLEENK, MAKIN' A HELLA MESS OUT OF EVERYTHEENK
ALERT ZE TROOPS!

WE JUST LOST MONDAY
HE DIED!!
NOT AGAAAIN
LIL PISSER SHOULDNA GONE THERE BY 'IS LONESOME!
NOW IS NOT THE TIME, TUESDAY
CONTROL, THIS IS SIR SUNDAY. SIR MONDAY HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION. I REPEAT, MONDAY IS K-I-A...
THE CHEF KILLED HIM. HEARD THE WHOLE DAMN THING ON 'IS HEADSET
SIR 8TH DAY
THE BIG BOSS
THE SUBMARINE CARTHEIM'S MOBILE HQ
DO WE PROCEED AS PLANNED? PLEASE ADVICE OVER.
ARE YOU THERE?
SIR?
ZZZZZZ
AHEM. I'M AFRAID SIR CAN'T HEAR ANY OF YOU. HE'S -- UNDISPOSED AT THE MOMENT
WHO'S JABBERING S'THAT THE BUTLER?
KISS MY ASS, TUESDAY
I SAY WE KICK THEIR ASS, BROTHER. IT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO FOR MONDAY
I'M WITH FATSO ON THIS ONE
WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST
AS
JUDE
HAS THAT EVER STOPPED YOU BEFORE?
WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO?
DO WHAT YOU ALWAYS DO

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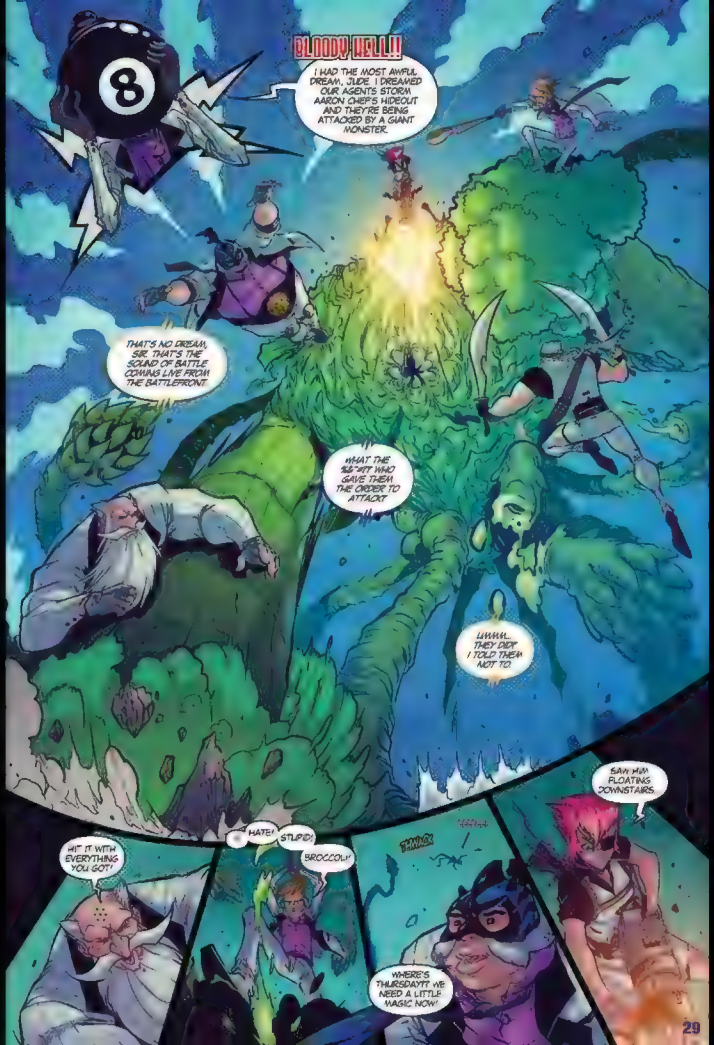
CREATED BY
RHOALD MARCELLIUS

ZIS AGENTS ZEY ALWAYS RUIN MY PLAN.
BUT NOT TODAY!
TODAY I 'AVE ZE POWER OF SATANIC CUISINE BY MY SIDE!
RROAAARRRGHHH!
RISE!
LES FIVEL SALADE
1 TON OF ASPARAGUS
1 TON OF LETTUCE
1 TON OF BROCCOLIS
1 TON OF CABBAGES
A MYSTERIOUS SPELL STOLEN FROM A THREE EYED DEMON GUARDING THE SCORPION PIT IN THE SIXTH CIRCLE OF HELL
FLESH & BLOOD OF YOUR MORTAL ENEMY
GUNPOWDER
- HALF A BOTTLE OF OLIVE OIL

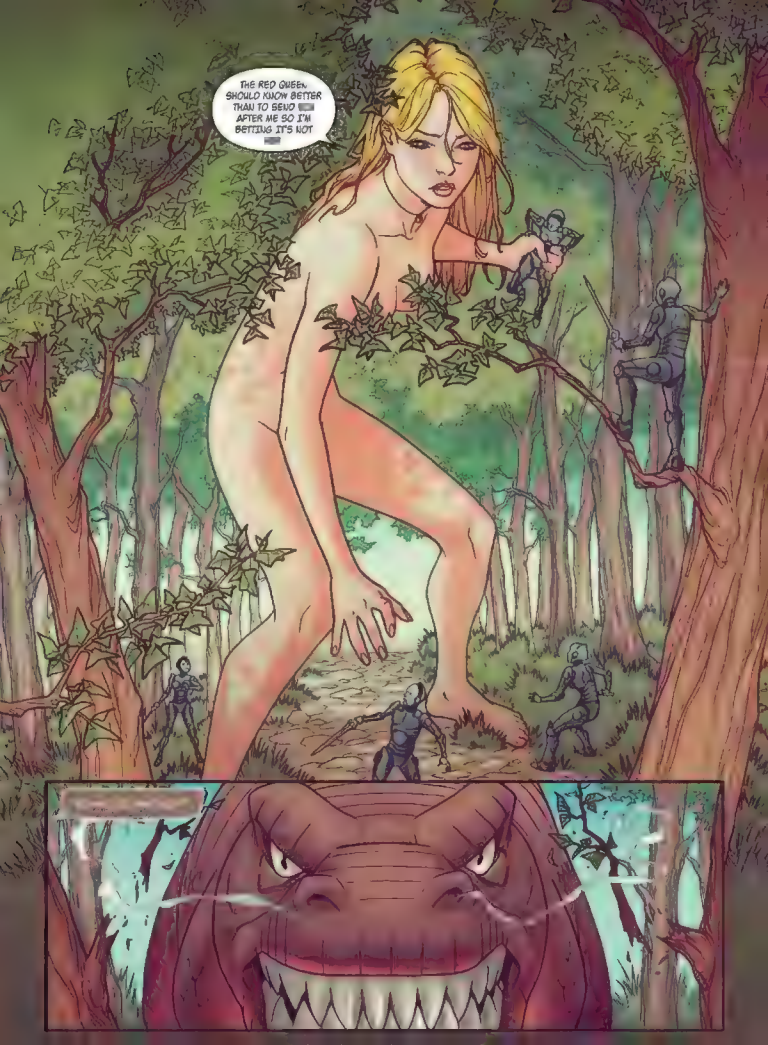

BLOODY HELL!!
I HAD THE MOST AWFUL DREAM, JUDE. I DREAMED OUR AGENTS STORM AARON CHEP'S HIDEOUT AND THEY'RE BEING ATTACKED BY A GIANT MONSTER.
THAT'S NO DREAM, SIR. THAT'S THE SQUAD OF BATTLE COMINS LIVE FROM THE BATTLEFRONT.
WHAT THE %$*#IT WHO GAVE THEM THE ORDER TO ATTACK?
UMMM... THEY DID? I TOLD THEM NOT TO.
SAW MAN FLOATING DOWNSTAIRS.
THWACK
WHERE'S THURSDAY?! WE NEED A LITTLE MAGIC NOW!
HATE!
STUPID!
BROCCOLI!
"HI" IT WITH EVERYTHING YOU GOT!

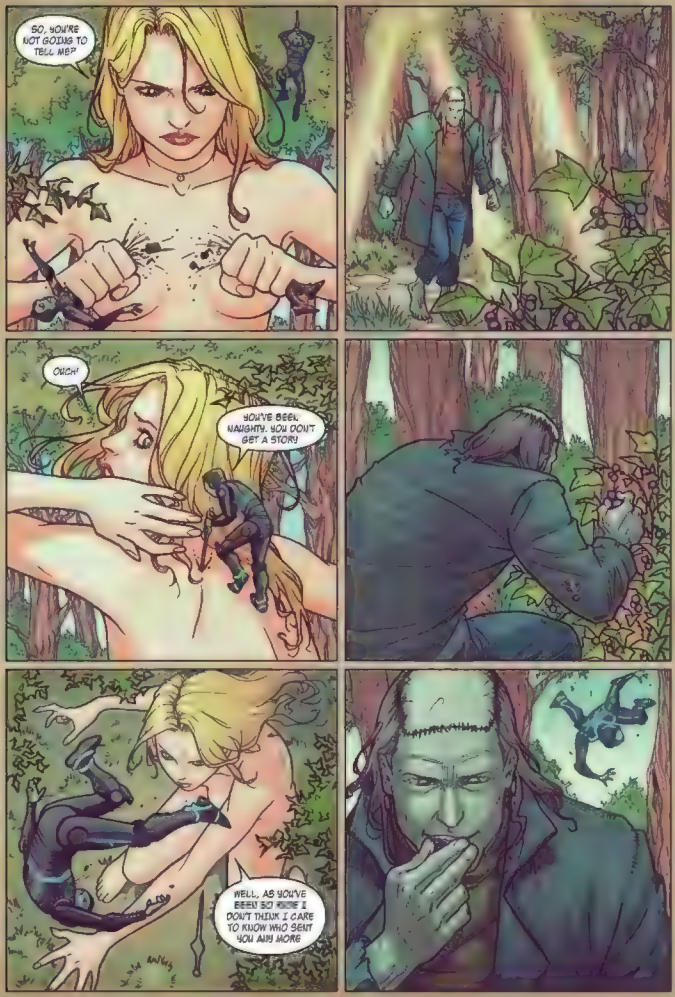
SAID HE GOT A PLAN TO STOP THIS--WHATEVER THIS IS.
GOOD CAUSE SMASHING DOESN'T WORK!
THURSDAY! ARE YOU STILL WITH US?!
TATA-TATATAT-TAT
TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!
HERE COMES SIR THURSDAY!
كفر
MMMOOOOOOO!
HELLA FIERCE!!
"EVERYBODY STEP BACK!"

Mmmoooooo!
SKRRRRIIIIIK!
KRUNCH!
"SO THURSDAY ATE THE MONSTER!"

THAT HE DID
THAT WAS MY PLAN ALL ALONG.
BESIDE THAT AIN'T THE WEIRDEST THING HE EVER ATE. NOT EVEN IN THE TOP THREE
AND WHAT HAPPENED TO AARON, CHEF?
HE RAN AWAY
SO YOU FAILED?
UHM.. WE WERE TOO BUSY TRYING NOT TO GET KILLED, BOSS-MAN!
HMMPH. I'LL PROGRAM ALL OF OUR SATELLITES TO LOOK FOR HIM. I NEED ALL OF YOU ON STAND BY.
CAN'T. NEED MY FEATHER AND FLIP
BESIDE WE DON'T HAVE A NEW MONDAY. WE CAN'T GO OUT THERE UNLESS THERE ARE SEVEN OF US.
HEY JUDE?
SIGH. I'LL MAKE SOME CALLS.
FUCK. SOMEONE THAT MOST LIKELY NOT TO GET KILLED ON HIS FIRST MISSION.
THAT JUST LEAVES ONE THING.
MMMOOOOOOO!
THE HELL ARE WE GONNA DO 'BOUT THURSDAY?
8
END.

THE WILD WOODS.
"THANK GOD FOR THE MUSHROOMS..."
THE WEIRDING WILLOWS
TWEEDLING DEE'S AND DUM'S


THE RED QUEEN SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO SEND [illegible] AFTER ME SO I'M BETTING IT'S NOT [illegible]


SO, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME?
OUCH!
YOU'VE BEEN NAUGHTY. YOU DON'T GET A STORY
WELL, AS YOU'VE BEEN SO NICE I DON'T THINK I CARE TO KNOW WHO SENT YOU ANY MORE

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I CHANGED MY MIND, OKAY? BESIDES, BALOO WILL LIKE SOME...
HURK!
PEACE AND QUIET! THAT'S ALL I WANTED
JUST ONE DAY!
UH... SORRY ABOUT THAT

WHAT A CURIOUS FEELING!
I DO BELIEVE ALICE IS SHRINKING, TWEEDLEDUM.
I DO BELIEVE YOU'RE RIGHT, TWEEDLEDEE
AND THERE ARE STILL FOUR OF US LEFT
DEAR, DEAR. I DO BELIEVE THERE ARE NOW ONLY TWO OF YOU.
ACK
AND THAT IS QUITE SUFFICIENT FOR A TINY-SIZED GIRL, LIKE YOU
DITTO!
OH.
HUNNY

I DON'T THINK WE NEED TO BRING HER BACK
I DON'T BELIEVE WE DO
JUST HER HEAD
HUH?
YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN WONDERLAND!
ONE DOWN, ONE TO GO...
NOT FAIR, JACK!
YEAH, YOUR LEGS ARE BIGGER THAN OURS
WADDYA MEANS, HORTON? I GIVES YOUZ A MILE HEAD START!

I WON..O REALLY CARRY OU RUNNING IF I WERE YOU
OH, REALLY? YOUR JIGSAW MAN WOUT BE HERE IN TIME
HUNNY
DAMOU? OH NO, I'D BE MORE WORRIED ABOUT BEING BETWEEN THIS HOUEY AND BACK
MINE! HOUEY ALL MINE!!
COME ON, BACK YOU HAVE TO GIVE US A TASTE TOO
BACK.
WHAT?!!
THIS HOUEY IS GONE?

WHO STOLE MY HONEY!!
I NEARLY GET KILLED BY THOSE MECHANICAL MONSTERS FROM WONDERLAND AND ALL YOU GUYS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IS JUST SOME HONEY?
"JUST"?
AT LEAST I WOULD HAVE SHARED IT
HOW SHARE? RIIIIGHT!
YUMMY
WELL YOU WON'T BE GOING BACK TO WONDERLAND FOR A WHILE
YOU ARE JOKING? I'M OUT OF MAGIC MUSHROOMS NOW
WE'RE GOING BACK AS SOON AS I PUT ANOTHER PAIR OF TROUSERS ON
DOES THEN HAS HONEY?

The War has lasted longer than most could remember.
They just knew it started when one of them stood up and spoke out against their Lord.

He, his family and friends were banished from HIS sight.

And CHAOS has reigned ever since.

Now a New Battle has begun and for the first time.
MAN has become involved.
HIS Chosen ones.

Neither Angel or Demon can stand upon the Face of the Earth.
But in the skin of man they make War.

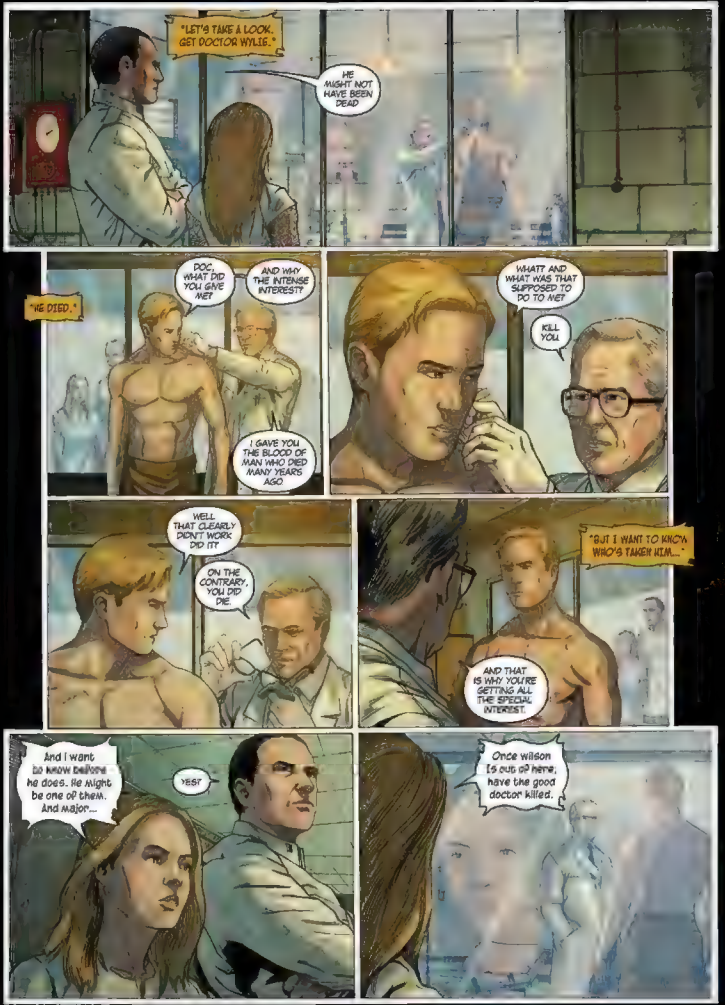
HE has forsaken them all, so they play with his creations.
Argue over who owns his toys, and so it goes...
Until the toys break.

PART TWO

Story by DAVE ELLIOTT – Line Art CARLO CASTODDY – Color by SAKTI YUWONO

I DON'T BELIEVE IT
It worked.
DID IT?
WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHERE'S MY UNIFORM AND HOW'D I GET DOWN HERE?
IF SOMETHING DID COME DOWN, WILSON IS STILL IN CONTROL
Is he?
I wonder


"LET'S TAKE A LOOK. GET DOCTOR WYLIE."
HE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN DEAD
"HE DIED."
DOC, WHAT DID YOU GIVE ME?
AND WHY THE INTENSE INTEREST?
I GAVE YOU THE BLOOD OF MAN WHO DIED MANY YEARS AGO
WHAT? AND WHAT WAS THAT SUPPOSED TO DO TO ME?
KILL YOU
WELL THAT CLEARLY DIDN'T WORK DID IT?
ON THE CONTRARY, YOU DID DIE.
"BUT I WANT TO KNOW WHO'S TAKEN HIM..."
AND THAT IS WHY YOU'RE GETTING ALL THE SPECIAL INTEREST.
And I want to know before he does.. He might be one of them. And Major...
YES?
Once Wilson is out of here, have the good doctor killed.

BERLIN, GERMANY, 1945
WE'RE GETTING THERE BUT IT'S TOO SLOW. WHERE IS HE?
HOW DO YOU KNOW HE'S NOT DEAD?
IF HE IS, SO ARE YOU, BECAUSE WE'RE NOT MOVING WITHOUT HIM.
WHO'S THE DOUBTING THOMAS, ABE?
JUST A PUNK FROM BROOKLYN. YOU OKAY, BLAZE?
BETTER THAN OKAY.
I GOT A WAY IN.
"AND OUR TARGET IS HOME FOR THE EVENING."

OH MY GOD. THIS IS HITLER'S HOUSE?
YOU DIDN'T THINK WE COULD DO THIS?
YEE OF LITTLE FAITH JAKE

JACOB!
IT WASN'T TIME!
DON'T, BROTHER. PRAYING TO YOUR GODS
NO ONE'S LISTENING TONIGHT
BLAZE! NEED YOU OVER HERE!!!

NEARLY AN HOUR LATER...
THE CAVALRY IS HERE!
BLAZE...
WHAT? CAP, YOU'RE OKAY?
YEAH, I AM...
ARE YOU?
I'M NOT SO SURE, ABE. NOT SO SURE.

"OH, COME ON NOW, NEVILLE WE'VE WELL AND TRULY FUCKED UP THE SUN ALL THOSE TESTS AND EXPERIMENTS ON IT, USING IT AS AN ENERGY SOURCE, IT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN LIKE THIS FOR AT LEAST 6 MILLION MORE YEARS."
"DO NOT TAKE ME FOR A FOOL JEFF YOU READ AND CONCURRED WITH THE THESIS MAX AND MYSELF COMPLETED CONCERNING JUPITER OUR RESULTS PROVE THAT IT WILL BECOME A STAR."
"OH YEAH RIGHT... HOW MANY THOUSANDS MILLIONS OF YEARS ALONG THE LINE WILL THIS LITTLE EVENT TAKE PLACE, THEN?"
"OH, GOD! STOP ARGUING LIKE A GROUP OF LITTLE BOYS, WILL YOU!?"
ELEPHANT'S GRAVEYARD
PENCILS: DOUG BRATHWAITE
STORY & INKS: DAVE ELLERY
Sorry, Stephanie. I know you are right.
Jeff... I'm sorry if we seem to come on a little strong.
STOP APOLOGIZING, MAX ESPECIALLY TO HIM! HE'S THE BASTARD WHO INVENTED THIS 'NEXT STEP IN MANKIND'S EVOLUTION' AND NOW HE DOESN'T KNOW IF HE SHOULD FOLLOW US..
SSH, YOU TWO, THIS WAS ONE OF SIR DAVID'S BEST
"...AND IT'S HERE IN TANZANIA ON THE PROTECTIVE TERRAIN OF THE MIKUMI NATIONAL PARK THAT THE VERY LAST WILD ELEPHANT WAS SLAUGHTERED."

KILLED, LIKE THIS YOUNG BULL. FOR THE SMALL AMOUNT OF IVORY ITS YEAR-OLD TUSKS COMPRISED OF
JUST WATCH THIS, O.K?
JEFF. We've all seen these tapes before What are you trying to tell us?
FORGET IT, MAX. JEFF WAS BORN THE SAME YEAR THE ELEPHANT FINALLY DISAPPEARED ALTOGETHER HE HASN'T BEEN THE SAME SINCE.
WHAT'S UP, JEFF? THIS YOUR WAY OF REMINDING US WE MISSED YOUR BIRTHDAY?
YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW, DO YOU? YOU FUCKING CANTANKEROUS OLD BASTARD! YOU'RE A SCIENTIST... BUT YOU'VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT'S BEEN LOST!
BIRDS FLYING THROUGH THE AIR, FISH SWIMMING IN THE SEA, ALL THE LIFE THIS PLANET ONCE HAD
NOW LOOK AT IT
WIPED OURSELVES OUT AND EVERYTHING WITH IT. Brilliant.
"IT'S DEATH, ONE STEP ONE BREATH OUT THAT DOOR
"...AND YOU WANT TO LIVE FOREVER IMMORTALS RULING OVER THE REMAINS OF WHAT'S LEFT A DEAD WORLD.

"I MEAN, IN THOSE FORMS YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE EARTH PASSING THROUGH THE VAN ALLEN BELT, THE RADIATION WILL KILL YOU!..."
"JEFF, ONE DAY THERE WILL BE LIFE AGAIN HERE IN WHATEVER FORM IT TAKES. WE'LL BE HERE TO SEE IT, AND WATCH OVER IT. WE DON'T NEED OUR BODIES FOR THAT."
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THAT, STEPHANIE... NOT FROM YOU. IT'S KNOWING I'LL NEVER TOUCH... MAKE LOVE TO YOU AGAIN. THAT MAKES THIS DECISION SO HARD
WAS IT JUST MY BODY THAT WAS SO IMPORTANT TO YOU, JEFF?
THERE'S SO MUCH WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT THESE FORMS...WHAT THEY CAN DO
OK. I THINK I'VE DECIDED
I JUST WANT TO GO OUTSIDE FOR ONE LAST WALK. FEEL THE GROUND UNDER MY FEET. THEN...hmm...THEN I'LL JOIN YOU
STOP! JEFF...
...YOUR CONTAINMENT SUIT!

AND NOW WE COME TO ONE OF MY FAVORITE CHARACTERS IN THE BIBLE. HIS NAME IS DANIEL.
I GUESS HE'S A FAVORITE BECAUSE HE'S JUST A GUY. NOT A PROPHET. NOT A KING. NOT A PRIEST. HE'S LIKE ME
ALTHOUGH I HAVE HEARD MY FAIR SHARE OF CONFESSIONS.
A WAR WAS FOUGHT IN A CITY CALLED JERUSALEM.
THE INVADING KING OF BABYLON MADE CERTAIN THE YOUNG MEN OF THE CITY BE MADE SLAVES.

DANIEL – Story & Art © SCOTT HAMPTON

THESE YOUNG MEN WERE GIVEN VARIOUS FORMS OF MEATS AND BREAD.
BUT DANIEL AND THREE FRIENDS MADE A DECISION TO CONTINUE IN A STRICT DIET TO HONOR THE AUTHOR.
AS A RESULT THEY WERE HEALTHIER THAN THE OTHER YOUNG MEN IN THE KING'S SERVICE.
AND THE AUTHOR GAVE THEM CLARITY OF MIND AND CLEVERNESS.

THE KING OF BABYLON WAS NAMED NEBUCHADNEZZAR.
AND LIKE SO MANY WHO SAT ON A THRONE, HIS NIGHTS WERE FILLED WITH TERRIBLE DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES.
BUT NONE OF HIS SAGES AND WIZARDS COULD INTERPRET THE DREAMS OF THE KING.
THAT'S NOT REALLY FAIR
THE KING INSISTED THAT IF HIS INTERPRETERS COULD NOT TELL HIM THE DREAM HE HAD IN THE FIRST PLACE, THEN THEY COULD NOT INTERPRET IT AND HAD NO REAL POWER.
THAT NIGHT, THE AUTHOR TOLD DANIEL OF THE DREAM THE KING HAD.
"MY GOD GAVE ME THE DREAM YOU HAD, KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR."
"YOU DREAMED OF A STATUE."
"IT'S HEAD WAS MADE OF GOLD. IT'S CHEST AND ARMOR, SILVER. BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRONZE. AND IT'S FEET IRON AND PARTLY BAKED CLAY."
"A ROCK HITS THE FEET OF THE STATUE, TOPPLING IT."

"AND THEN THE ROCK BEGAN TO GROW."
"IT GREW LARGER, AND LARGER."
"IT BECAME A MOUNTAIN, AND OVERWHELMED EVERYTHING."
"WHAT THIS MEANS, OH KING OF BABYLON, IS THAT YOU ARE THE GREATEST KING ON THE EARTH."
"YOU ARE THE HEAD OF GOLD."
"WHEREVER YOU GO, YOU WILL BE GIVEN POWER, AND WILL BE CALLED KING."
"THE KING THAT FOLLOWS YOU, THOUGH, WILL NOT BE AS GREAT A KING AND HIS KINGDOM WILL NOT BE AS STRONG."
"AND THE KING THAT FOLLOWS THAT WILL BE EVEN LESS POWERFUL. YOUR LANDS WILL ONE DAY BECOME A KINGDOM DIVIDED AND EASILY BROKEN."
"BUT IN THOSE DAYS, THE AUTHOR WILL ESTABLISH A KINGDOM THAT IS AS UNBREAKABLE AS A ROCK. IT WILL BREAK THE FEET OF ALL OTHER KINGDOMS, AND GROW OVER ALL THE EARTH."
"THAT IS YOUR DREAM, AND THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS."
DANIEL WAS REWARDED BY THE KING AND GIVEN A POSITION OF HIGH AUTHORITY IN BABYLON. HE WAS A SLAVE NO MORE.
THE KING ALSO COMMENDED THE AUTHOR.

YOU KNOW, AFTER A DREAM LIKE THAT--
--AFTER BEING TOLD HE WAS THE GREATEST KING--
--IT'S PROBABLY NOT FAIR TO SAY THAT KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR WAS WRONG TO BUILD A GOLD STATUE OF HIMSELF AND INSIST THAT EVERYONE BOW DOWN BEFORE IT.
EVERYONE BUT DANIEL'S THREE FRIENDS.
THEY WERE TAKEN PRISONER BY THE GUARDS AND BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING.
THE KING INSISTED THAT THEY BE KILLED, BURNED IN THE SAME FURNACE THAT FORGED THE GOLDEN IMAGE WHICH THEY REFUSED TO BOW BEFORE.
"IF YOU THROW US IN THE FURNACE, OUR GOD CAN SAVE US. BUT IF HE DOES NOT, WE WILL STILL NOT BOW BEFORE A FALSE GOD."

WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT THIS STORY IS THAT THEY DID NOT BURN IN THE FURNACE.
AND WHEN THE KING'S GUARDS LOOKED INTO THE FURNACE, THEY SAW THAT THERE WERE FOUR MEN IN THERE. NOT THREE.
THE AUTHOR SAVED THEM, AND WAS BEGINNING TO WRITE HIMSELF INTO THEIR STORY, JUST AS HE SUGGESTED IN THE DREAM OF KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR.
HE SAVED THEM FROM THE FURNACE...

... AND WOULD ONE DAY SAVE THEM FROM THE POISON THAT HAD BEEN PASSED ON SINCE ADAM.
IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE THAT KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAD ANOTHER DREAM.
THE KING DREAMED OF A TREE
A PERFECT TREE. A TREE WHOSE BRANCHES STRETCHED HIGHER THAN YOU COULD IMAGINE.
ANIMALS LIVED UNDER THE BRANCHES AND WITHIN THEM. IT GAVE SHELTER TO SO MANY.
THEN A MESSENGER FROM HEAVEN DESCENDED AND HAD THE TREE CUT DOWN.

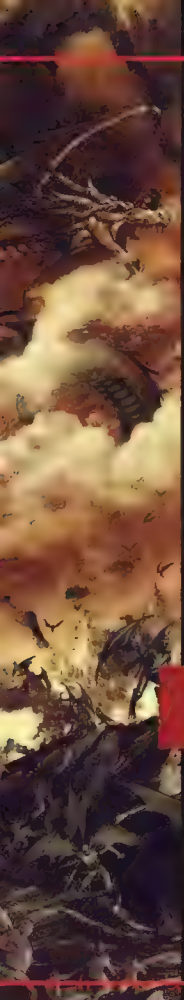
LEAVING ONLY A STUMP OF IRON AND BRONZE BEHIND.
"I'M SORRY, MY KING."
"I DO NOT WANT TO TELL YOU WHAT THIS DREAM MEANS."

"TWICE NOW, YOU'VE PRAISED THE AUTHOR TWICE NOW YOU'VE *PRAISED* HIM OUT LOUD AND TOLD YOUR PEOPLE HE WAS *RIGHT* AND *TRUE*..."

"...YET *AGAIN* AND *AGAIN*, YOU TURNED AWAY FROM HIM," DANIEL TOLD THE KING

EATING GRASS, HUNTING FOR FOOD.

AND JUST LIKE HE SAID, IT HAPPENED.
THE KING WENT MAD.
HE BECAME LIKE AN ANIMAL.
HE WENT INSANE.
UNTIL THE DAY THE AUTHOR DEFINED HIM AGAIN AS KING. AND HE REMEMBERED WHO HE WAS.
AND THE KING REMEMBERED WHO THE AUTHOR WAS AND SWORE THAT DANIEL'S GOD WAS THE ONE TRUE GOD.
UNTIL THE END OF HIS REIGN.



Dante's Inferno

Hellacious Artistic Imagination

What's the Worst that Could Happen?

By Stachgmotic

Sometimes in youth we play crazy mind games. One gruesome game was trying to think of the worst way to die. Or even better, the "which would you choose" version of the same conceit. Another was what would be the worst torture to endure. If there is one international touchstone that best captures youthful fears and wonders in speculation of what lies beyond the veil of death and awaits as possible punishment for our sins, it must be - to the few who have actually read it to the millions who "know" it – "Dante's Inferno." Who does not shiver at the thought of being lost somewhere in the "Nine Rings of Hell?" True nastiness reigns on every single one of the nine levels.

Actually, the nine circles of Hell ("Inferno") are detailed only as the first third of Dante's first great masterpiece of Italian literature, "The Divine Comedy," which leads the reader on through Purgatory and then eventually into Heaven ("Paradiso"). This epic poem was like the first self-help manual, describing the how and why one falls into Hell and how to live a God-fearing life guaranteed to get you into Heaven. But over the centuries, as the fearsome images illustrating this piece mightily attest to, it is the horrors of the Inferno that have remained burned into the fearful collective consciousness of a segment of our society.

> "Who does not shiver at the thought of being lost somewhere in the "Nine Rings of Hell?"

There are so many amazing fantastic images described in *The Comedy* for artists to bring to life: The three-headed hell-hound Cerberus; the river Styx with its surface a roiling morass of damned souls fighting with each other; the dragon wyvern Geryon with human face, lion paws and stinger in tail. The center of Hell, usually depicted as a place of eternal fire, is in Dante's vision a place of perpetual ice. Satan himself with three his faces (red, black and yellow) and three pairs of wings remains forever frozen waist deep in the ice.

Join the Discussion

http://technomatic.deviantart.com/journal/Dantes-Inferno-What-s-the-Worst-that-Could-Happen-178889193

> **One needn't be the ultimate sinner to go to Hell, nor be a saint to go to Heaven.**

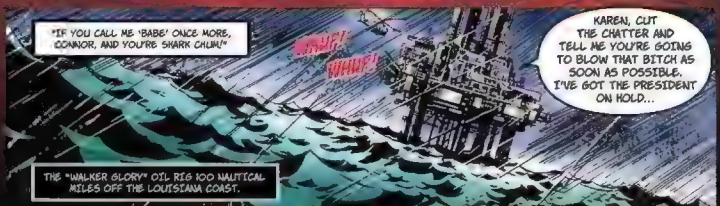
There are many misconceptions about Dante's epic prescription for salvation. One needn't be the ultimate sinner to go to Hell, nor be a saint to go to Heaven. Hell, I think according to Dante if you just remember to pray for forgiveness as you lay dying, you start your post-life existence in Purgatory, getting to skip all the tortures of all Hell's nine circles. In Dante's theology, the anchoring basis for all "sin" is disbelief. So if the saintliest of human beings alive on the planet chooses atheism, eternal damnation and hideous torture awaits. If a hitman sincerely prays to God, confessing his sins and swearing his belief in God, Paradise will be his eternal home after a brief detention in Purgatory.

So maybe this is why this is the one narrative, the deliriously frightening epic fairy tale, that remains lurking in the mind's shadows well into adulthood. Dante has proposed to us a cradle to grave gamble. If the Inferno is only a fairy tale, an allegorical warning against disconnection from the divine in life - then the stakes are not so high. But if Dante's vision is somehow "true" and demands belief – well, that's a whole other adult mind game with stakes that could not be higher.

I did as much research as possible with the time allowed. Do we have any scholars out there who might shed an even more educative light on the subject? Has anyone read the Divine Comedy recently? Would love to hear opinions, analysis and corrections from those of you even more familiar with the history of this material than I.

"The Vault" Artwork by Garrie Gastenny
http://thegerjoos.deviantart.com

AW, SHIT...
DEEP SIX
ODYSSEY
WHAT MUTHAFUCKER TRIED BUILDING THIS OUT OF LEGOS?
THAT HOLE'S SPEWING SIXTY THOUSAND BARRELS OF CRUDE A DAY, BABE. LET'S BLOW IT!
260 METERS BELOW THE GULF OF MEXICO.


"IF YOU CALL ME 'BABE' ONCE MORE, CONNOR, AND YOU'RE SHARK CHUM!"
KAREN, CUT THE CHATTER AND TELL ME YOU'RE GOING TO BLOW THAT BITCH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I'VE GOT THE PRESIDENT ON HOLD...
THE "WALKER GLORY" OIL RIG 100 NAUTICAL MILES OFF THE LOUISIANA COAST.

MIKE, THE PRESIDENT IS THE LEAST OF MY WORRIES.
SHIT, JEFF... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? SUDDENLY YOU DON'T TRUST US?

THIS IS ABOUT MORE THAN RACHEL MADDOW CHEWING ME OUT ON HER SHOW FOR ANOTHER NIGHT. I DON'T LOSE SLEEP OVER CRAP LIKE THAT.
CAN'T BE THE INSURANCE, YOU'LL MAKE OUT LIKE A BANDIT AGAIN... SO, WHAT IS IT?

THE CARDIFF GROUP HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO A HOSTILE TAKEOVER FOR AGES. ASCOT-BURTON WON'T TAKE MY CALLS AND YOU'VE GOT THE PRESIDENT HOLDING WHEN HE WON'T TAKE MY CALLS.
YOU'VE KNOWN ME A LONG TIME, MIKE. I DON'T USE ANY INFERIOR MATERIALS ON MY RIGS. I PAY MY MEN WELL, WITH FULL BENEFITS AND TREAT THEM RIGHT...

I KNOW THAT, JEFF, BUT RIGHT NOW I DON'T NEED TO BE DRAWN INTO POLITICS.
THIS STORM IS GETTING WORSE AND THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANYTHING EASIER. LET US DO OUR JOB. JEREMY?
BOSS, WE'LL HAVE THUNDERBIRD FOUR READY FOR ACTION IN TEN MINUTES.

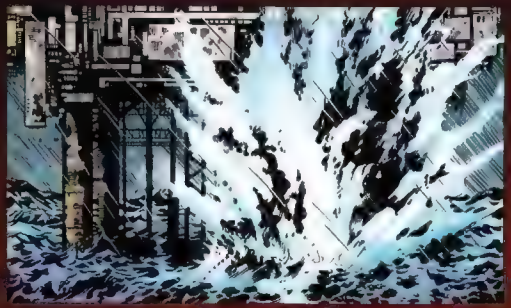
MIKE, YOU KNOW FULL WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF MY COMPANY IS TAKEN OVER. THE HEALTH AND SAFE REGULATIONS WILL BE LIKE THE OTHERS. LAUGHABLE.
AND YOU THINK YOUR CONNECTIONS CAN KEEP YOU GOING?
MY "CONNECTIONS" HAVE ALWAYS DONE ME MORE HARM THAN GOOD. BOBBY, UPDATE!

YO MIKE, WE GOT THIS. KAREN'S ALMOST IN PLACE NOW.
ROBERT, DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RIGHT NOW
ROBERT? OUCH, THE HEAT REALLY IS UP, ISN'T IT? NOT SURPRISING SEEING THE FLOW RATE COMING OUT THIS PUPPY'S ASS.
CONNOR'S READY TO PULL KAREN OUT THE MOMENT THE CHARGE IS IN PLACE.
MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T FUCK UP.
KAREN, THIS IS MIKE. YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MORE TIME. I NEED YOU TO...
WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IS SHUT THE FUCK UP, MIKE! I'M DOING THIS AS FAST AS I CAN. HAVING YOU WHINING DOESN'T HELP.
THE HEAT DOWN HERE IS UNBEARABLE. I THINK I'M FINALLY GOING TO HAVE THAT FIGURE I HAD AT 13
OKAY! DONE IT! CHARGE IN PLACE. 1 MINUTE AND COUNTING. GETTING OUT NOW!

SHIT! SHIT! SHIT! MY SUITS SEIZING UP. I CAN'T MOVE!
KAREN? KAREN!? REPLY DAMN IT!!
WHERE THE FUCK IS CONNOR?
HAVE NO FEAR, BABE. CONNOR IS HERE
I'LL PUT THAT ON YOUR GRAVESTONE, SHITHEAD!
NOW ABOUT THAT TRIP WE'VE BEEN DISCUSSING, KAREN... HOW ABOUT A WEEK IN BALI?
SOUNDS GOOD, AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT THERE AS WELL
HOOKED OUR FISH, BUT SHE WAS WRONG ABOUT LOSING THOSE POUNDS..

CONNOR, YOU'VE GOT JUST 30 SECONDS. GET HER OUT OF THAT SUIT
THEN GIVE HER YOUR EMERGENCY TANK.
GET YER KIT OFF GIRL!
00:00:23
00:00:19
OKAY BOBBY, GET THE NAUTILUS IN GEAR. WE'RE COMING YOUR WAY!

00:00:05

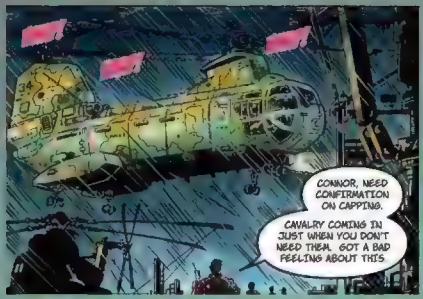


CONNOR, KAREN, BOBBY?! ANSWER ME DAMMIT!!

MIKE, THE NAUTILUS IS DOWN. KAREN'S CHECKING BOBBY WHILE I'M CHECKING FOR DAMAGE.
S'OKAY EVERYBODY. I'M STILL ALIVE, BUT THE NAUTILUS HAS TAKEN A BEATING. EMERGENCY POWER ONLY.

DOING A SYSTEM CHECK NOW.

FIRST PERSON WHO SAYS "STAY PUT" DIES.


CONNOR, NEED CONFIRMATION ON CAPPING.
CAVALRY COMING IN JUST WHEN YOU DON'T NEED THEM. GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS

HOLD TIGHT, BOBBY. GETTING READY TO DROP THUNDERBIRD 4 TO BRING YOU UP

SORRY TO DO THIS, MIKE, BUT YOU'RE NOT PUTTING ANYTHING IN THE WATER WITHOUT MY SAY SO.
I'M LOOKING FOR YOUR UNCLE JOHN AND I FIGURED HANGING OUT WITH YOUR CREW OUT HERE WOULD BE A GREAT WAY FOR HIM TO DROP OFF THE RADAR.

AAAHSHSSSHHTTHHH---
AAAHSHSSSHHTTHHH---
BOBBY, WE SHOULD HAVE THIS DEBRIS CLEARED IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES.
WELL UNLESS I REBOOT THE SYSTEM AND GET THE POWER GOING I WON'T BE GOING ANYWHERE.
I'M DIGGING THE FACT KAREN CAN'T TALK BACK RIGHT NOW.
WHOA... THE WATER TEMPERATURE JUST ROSE AGAIN. I THOUGHT WE...
CONNOR? YOU THOUGHT WHAT?

AAAHASAMASSA ATTATAASAH!
... OH SHIT!

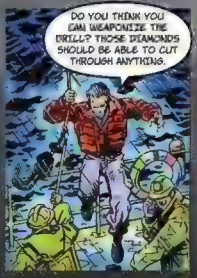
THIS IS BULLSHIT, YUKA. I HAVEN'T HAD CONTACT WITH MY UNCLE JOHN SINCE I SERVED IN IRAQ. YOUR 'PEOPLE' SHOULD KNOW THAT
AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO STOP ME LAUNCHING THIS SUB IF IT HAS A CHANCE OF SAVING MY CREW ESPECIALLY WHEN I TELL YOU WHO'S ON BOARD...
YOURS AND JOHN'S SON BOBBY
I... I STILL CAN'T LET YOU DO IT, MIKE
I DON'T NEED TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND JOHN. I STILL DON'T GET WHY NEITHER OF YOU HAVE ASED IN OVER THIRTY YEARS.
BUT THIS IS ABOUT SAVING THE LIVES OF MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY..
SO FUCK YOU!
JEREMY? THUNDERBIRD 4 IS READY FOR LAUNCH.
LET HER GO!!
YAHOO!!
WE'RE IN! SONAR ON AND...
HOLY SHIT!! I'M GETTING MULTIPLE READINGS..

GETTING READINGS ALL AROUND THE SUB...
...SOMETHING DOWN HERE WITH ME.
WE'VE BEEN HIT BY SOMETHING!!
KRRLMPH!
JEREMY!! WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT??!!
GOT NO IDEA, MIKE! BUT IT TOOK ONE OF THE SUB'S ARMS AND IS HEADING YOUR WAY!
YUKA, YOU AND THE GOVERNMENT ARE WASTING MY TIME ASKING ABOUT JOHN AND I DON'T HAVE ANY TO SPARE.
I'M SAVING LIVES HERE! IT'S WHAT I STARTED DEEP SIX TO DO.
JUST DON'T GET DEEP SIX'D YOURSELF, MIKE
FUNNY.
TREVOR! SWING ME OVER TO YOUR LAUNCH.
SHIT'S COMING.
"... AND IT'S GONNA BE A BIG ONE!"

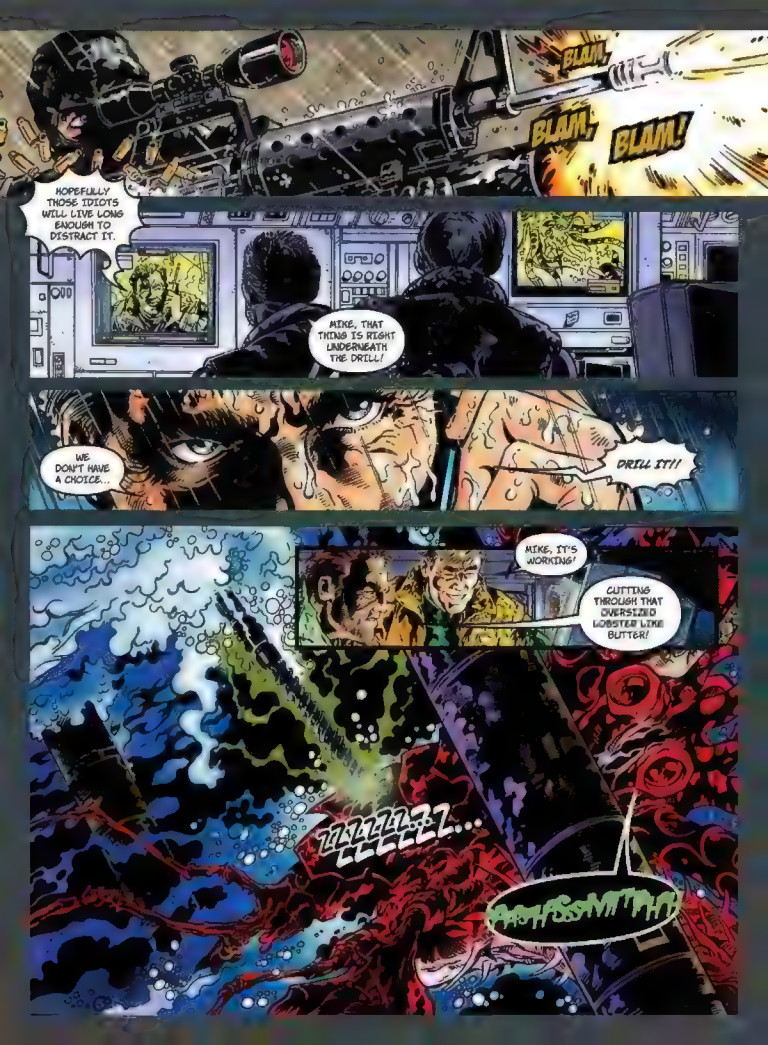
THRACK!!!
BWOMMMB!
AAH!!
UGH!

JOE, YOU COPY? TELL ME OUR OPTIONS.
OKAY GUYS, THIS HAS JUST MADE A BAD DAY WORSE! GET THE FIRE CREW ON THIS DOUBLE TIME!!

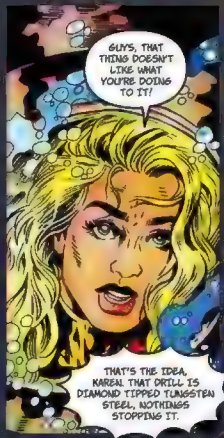
MIKE, THE WELL IS PLUGGED AND CREW'S SAFE.
THE DRILL REPLACEMENT IS IN PLACE AND WE WERE ABOUT TO LOWER IT NOW.


DO YOU THINK YOU CAN WEAPONIZE THE DRILL? THOSE DIAMONDS SHOULD BE ABLE TO CUT THROUGH ANYTHING.

WHATEVER YOU BOYS ARE GOING TO DO, DO IT NOW. LOOKS LIKE THAT ASIAN CUTIES FRIENDS ARE LOOKING TO MAKE IT EVEN ANGRIER


BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
HOPEFULLY THOSE IDIOTS WILL LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO DISTRACT IT.
MIKE, THAT THING IS RIGHT UNDERNEATH THE DRILL!
WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE...
DRILL IT!!
MIKE, IT'S WORKING!
CUTTING THROUGH THAT OVERSIZED LOBSTER LIKE BUTTER!
ZZZZZZZZZZ...
SHHSSSHHH

AARGHFSSSMTTPHH


GUYS, THAT THING DOESN'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO IT!
THAT'S THE IDEA, KAREN! THAT DRILL IS DIAMOND TIPPED TUNGSTEN STEEL, NOTHING'S STOPPING IT.

AND YOU WERE SAYING?

JESUS JOE, WHAT ELSE WE GOT TO THROW AT IT?
WE'D NEVER GET ANOTHER DRILL BIT LOADED IN TIME
KAREN, ARE YOU LOT SAFE?

"WE'RE ALL SAFE IN THUNDERBIRD FOUR. BUT IT'S YOU WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT!"

AKTHUHHH
HOW DID IT KNOW WE WERE CONTROLLING THE DRILL?
IT CAN'T HAVE!!
KEEP THAT PRESSURE ON THE CHOPPER! PUSH IT OFF THE PLATFORM!!
TREVOR! GET ME BACK OVER TO THE PLATFORM AND GET THE JET SKIFF DOWN IN THE WATER.
OKAY CHIEF!
GUYS! MOVE IT!!
IF WE LOSE THIS RIG WE DON'T GET PAID!
WHAT, NOTHING?!
ALWAYS READ YOUR CONTRACTS, TREV!
JOE, DID YOU SLOW THAT THING DOWN AT ALL?
DON'T KNOW MIKE, IT JUST DISAPPEARED
HOLD IT. SONAR SHOWS IT'S HUGGING THE WELLHEAD... LIKE IT'S PROTECTING IT

WONDERING IF THIS COULD BE TIED TO WHAT MICHAEL PAGE AND GABRIELLE PARKER WENT THROUGH ON SABLE ISLAND...
BOBBY, DROPPING OFF THE SKIFF PACKED WITH GOODIES.
GOT IT, MIKE. WANT US TO THROW IN WHAT WE'VE GOT HERE?
WHATEVER EXPLOSIVES YOU GOT. LET'S FUCK THAT BITCH!
MIKE! GO AND GET LAID WILL YOU! STOP CALLING EVERYTHING A BITCH.
WHAT CAN I SAY? THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE LEFT THEIR MARK.
BOBBY, WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS...
YOU JUST GET IT TO THE SURFACE, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST
SO WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET PRETTY CLOSE TO THAT THING. YOU THINK IT'S GOING TO LET US?
NOT PLANNING ON ASKING PERMISSION, CONNOR..
... WE'RE GOING TO RAM THIS DOWN ITS THROAT AND BLOW ITS FUCKING BRAINS OUT!

MIKE, WE'RE IN THE WATER
ASK HER IF SHE'S GOT THE LAST FIVE YEARS OF BIRTHDAY AND CHRISTMAS PRESENTS WITH HER.
OKAY CONNOR, JUST GOT TO GET RID OF BOBBY'S MOM MOM.
YUKA, GET JEFF AND YOURSELF OFF THE PLATFORM WHILE YOU STILL CAN. THIS WILL BE UGLY NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.
LOAD THAT UP, BOBBY. I'M DRIVING.
THIS NEEDS TO BE A HOLE IN ONE, MATE.
IT'LL BE LIKE ME AND KAREN.
THAT'S WHAT I'M AFRAID OF.
STEVE, I'M COMING ABOARD HOPE YOU'RE READY.
FOR A FISHING TRIP LIKE THIS? HELL YEAH. BEERS LOADED, JUST NEED YOUR HOOK!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. JONN'S NOT HERE.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR SON?
"BOBBY'S A BIG BOY NOW. HE CAN HANDLE HIMSELF."
SHE'S GOING FOR THE BAIT... GUYS? NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO HOOK HER!
"DON'T GET YOUR KNICKERS IN A TWIST, KAREN. WE GOT THIS..
BOBBY, WHERE ARE YOU?
DON'T FRET, BIG GUY. WE'RE CIRCLING. BRING HER UP AND CONNOR'LL GIVE HER A KISS SHE WON'T FORGET.

"PUCKER UP... HERE SHE COMES!!"
PAAA

RRRR

RRRRRRMM-KRAM!!
WELL THAT WASN'T WHAT I WAS EXPECTING
FIRING BLANKS, CONNOR?
LEAVE IT TO THE GIRL TO FINISH OFF
GO AHEAD, BITCH!
MAKE MY DAY!!
BAM!

KAB-BLAM

!
YIPPIE KI-YAY!! BONUS RIGHT?
NOW THAT IS A NICE VIEW
DEAD MONSTER, RIG SAFE... YEAH, WE'LL ALL GET A BONUS.
BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK IT WAS PROTECTING SOMETHING...
SOMETHING WE'LL FIND IF JEFF KEEPS DRILLING HERE AND IT WON'T BE NICE.
- THE END -

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JOHNSON

Robotic Boo and Girl Sitting © 2013 Dave Johnson

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COMING SOON!!
START SAVING NOW!
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MAN, THE DRAGON'S THE BISNESS. I MEAN, HE'S SUCH A BABE MAGNET! THE GIRLS ARE TRIPPING ALL OVER EACH OTHER TO GET TO HIM!
AND IS HE STRONG, OR WHAT?

BLAZIN' GLORY!
MAN, I WAS ONLY FOUR WHEN THEY PUT HIM IN THE GROUND. MOM SAID THE GERMANS WOULD HAVE WON WORLD WAR II IF NOT FOR HIM! SOME STILL CELEBRATE "GLORY DAY", BUT IT'S LOST ITS SPARK FOR ANYONE UNDER THIRTY, I GUESS. GETTING HARDER TO FIND PEOPLE WHO REMEMBER HIM.

Script: DAVE ELLIOTT – Line Art: ALEX HORLEY – Color: SHARON GINO

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NOW, HERE'S A CRAZY ONE! RAVENCLAW, MAN, WHATEVER HE'S ON, I WANT SOME!
NO ONE MESSES WITH THIS GUY. HE'S TOTALLY OUT THERE DOIN' HE'S OWN THING.
ONLY I DON'T THINK EVEN HE KNOWS WHAT HIS THING IS!
OH, YES! WHAT THEY ALL DREAM OF AND ONLY ONE WILL HAVE...
WE'RE NOT WORTHY! WE'RE NOT WORTHY!!

AHHH! THE STORM GODDESS THOR STORMHAUSEN!
THAT'S MAX TO HER FRIENDS. LIKE ME.
YOU DON'T THINK WE'RE FRIENDS? LISTEN, PAL, WHO DID YOU THINK I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT?
OH, MAYBE NOT LOOKING LIKE THIS! BUT I CAN SOON FIX THAT!
"GO! GO! THE FORM OF BOY..."
"...RISE THE LURVE GOD..."

SHARK

WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT IRRESPONSIBLITY

Dave Elliott

Alex Horley

SHARK

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Issue #1 Wraparound Cover by
ULISES FARINAS
(Transformers: Heart of Darkness; The New York Times)

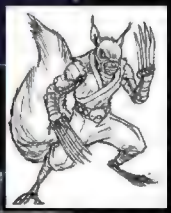
"I love doing big battle or crowd scenes, as I was always fascinated by Where's Waldo and I Spy books as a kid. Having so much detail in one piece provides a certain amount of motion and life to me, and I try to accomplish the dynamism I've seen in classic paintings like 'Washington Crossing the Delaware.' My favorite Battle Beast in this piece is the little hedgehog dude in the lower left corner. I wish I could draw him his own comic. He's got moxie."

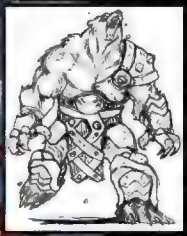
The Art of War

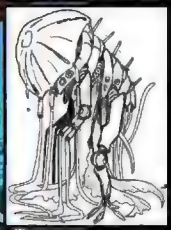
For millennia, mankind's dominance over the globe has gone unchallenged. The animals of Earth are largely happy where they are, and hardly ever force us to defend our territory with our superior firepower. But what if they wanted something? And wore body armor? And had swords and axes? That was the idea behind Battle Beasts, the new comic book from IDW Publishing, based on the upcoming toy line from Diamond Select Toys. An action film on the printed page, the comic plunges the reader into the chaos of an alien invasion, where the aliens are instantly familiar as the diverse mammal, reptile, bird and even fish species of Earth, only bigger, meaner and more heavily armed. With the trade paperback coming to comic book shops, Heavy Metal was granted a peek at the unadulterated artwork of Battle Beasts, including covers, sketches and even toy concepts, all with commentary from the artists.

Issue #3 Cover and Character Designs by
VALERIO SCHITI
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Journey Into Mystery!

"Bobby [Curnow, writer] and I didn't want 'Battle Beasts' to be a silly comic book with a trivial story and ridiculous characters. Bobby wrote a script full of twists, drama, action and believable characters, so I worked on the poses and the expressions for those believable characters. Even if they're animals, I tried to make them 'real' – sad or happy when they need to, but when they fight, they fight to the death! That's what I like about this cover: the clear visualization of cool, realistic characters fighting! With a single image, I tried to say 'We're not joking here!' Kudos should go to the colorist, Claudia SGC; the work on the atmosphere, the 'color mood' is hers. She's an amazing artist."







Issue #1 Cover by
DAN BRERETON
(Nocturnals, Giantkiller, The Last Battle)

Issue #2-4 Triptych Cover by
JEFF ZORNOW
(Godzilla, Jurassic Park covers)

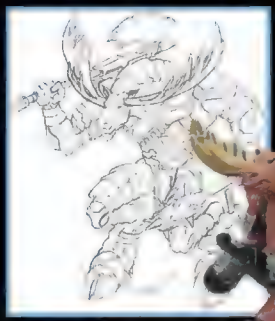
"If you look back at many of the Hanna Barbera action/adventure cartoons of the late '70s and early '80s, Super Friends being a good example, the closing credits had this bright yellow/orange spattery background painting that looked like a dramatic explosion. I always really loved the look of that painting as a kid, so I thought it would make a nice background for a giant mass of fighting Battle Beasts!Right now my biggest influences are Takehiko Inoue (Vagabond, Slam Dunk!) and Junji Ito (Uzumaki, Tomie), and of course I'm always inspired by the crew from EC Comics, back when they were ruling the comics world."

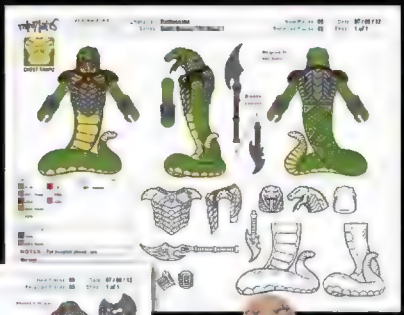
Battle Beasts Concept Art by:

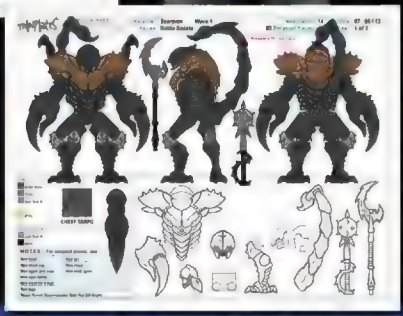
MARK WONG

Art Asylum

"My favorite design is the moose, because he has a woodsman or huntsman quality about him. His gear is typical of a ranger who lives off the land. And for his personality, I wanted him to look like a good guy. Even though he's massive, and muscular, and carries this huge axe, he's still noble. I think my favorite translation to Minimate form is the Scorpion or the Spider. The Minimates line already had multi-armed characters, and this was an opportunity to make a hip system for multiple legs. And while I like the armor and tail on the Scorpion, the Spider really extends the concept of what a Minimate can be."







PREVIEW!

On the following pages, check out the first eight pages of the 144-page [illegible] mini-comic, which will be released this December in a paperback edition from IDW Publishing!

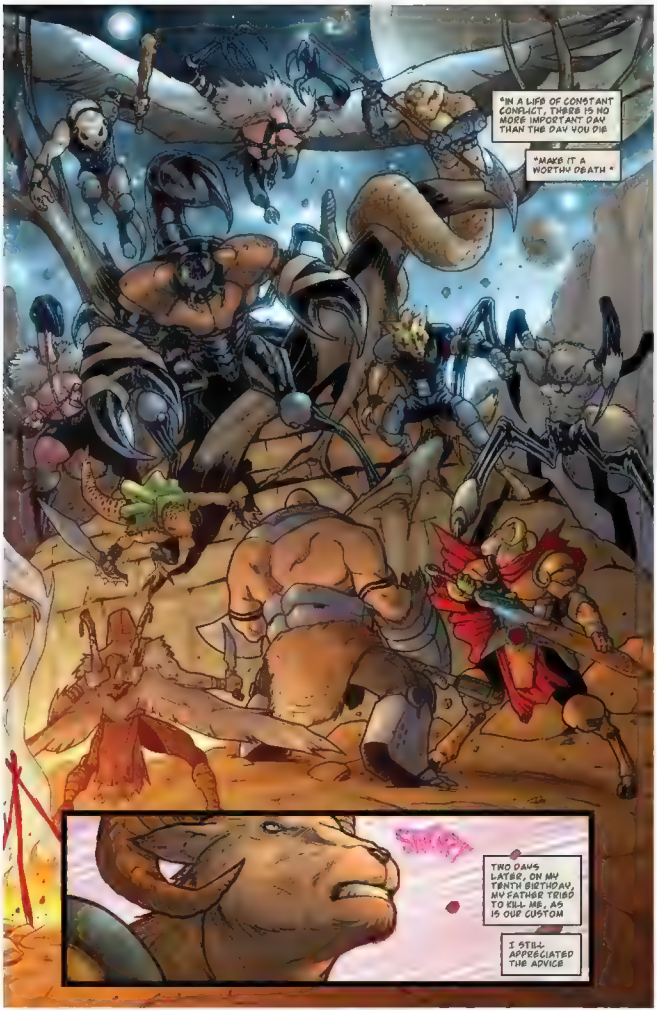
Written by
BOBBY CURNOW

Art by
VALERIO SCHITI

Colors by
CLAUDIA SGO

For more information on the comic book and toy line, visit battlebeast.com!

MY FATHER TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS
AT AGE TWO, HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO PARRY AN OVERHEAD STRIKE. AT AGE FOUR, HOW TO FORGE A SWORD. AGE SIX, HOW TO REMOVE AN ARROWHEAD WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE.
ARE YOU GOING TO FINISH THAT?
FOR THE FIFTH AND FINAL TIME, WES! I AM EATING ALL OF MY FOOD!
WELL, YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR ASKING! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHEN YOU'RE DONE. ALWAYS PECKING, STOPPING, AND STARTING!
AT AGE EIGHT, MY FATHER TAUGHT ME HOW TO MOST EFFICIENTLY BREAK AN ENEMY'S NECK
IS IT SO STRANGE TO SAVOR ONE'S FOOD?
OR MUST ONE CONTINUOUSLY SHOVEL IT DOWN IN A GROTESQUE DISPLAY OF BOTTOMLESS GLUTTONY?
YES, THAT LAST THING YOU SAID—THAT IS THE PROPER WAY TO EAT!
I WOULD NOT BE THE WARRIOR I AM TODAY WITHOUT HIS TEACHINGS.
FORGIVE ME IF I REFRAIN FROM TAKING ETIQUETTE LESSONS FROM THE LIKES OF Y—
SHH!
YET HE GAVE ME ONE PIECE OF ADVICE I PRIZE ABOVE ALL OTHERS


"IN A LIFE OF CONSTANT CONFLICT, THERE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT DAY THAN THE DAY YOU DIE.
"MAKE IT A WORTHY DEATH."
TWO DAYS LATER, ON MY TENTH BIRTHDAY, MY FATHER TRIED TO KILL ME, AS IS OUR CUSTOM
I STILL APPRECIATED THE ADVICE

'ERE YOU TRAITORS ARE! 'AD US LOOKING ALL OVER THIS BEAUTIFUL WASTELAND, YOU DID!
NOW, MIND YOURSELF, BROTHERS. IT'D BE A SHAME TO COME ALL THIS WAY AND NOT COLLECT THE BOUNTY JUST 'CUZ WE WENT AND MUTILATED 'EIR BODIES BEYOND RECOGNITION.
WE ARE GRAVELY OUTNUMBERED.
WHEN ARE WE EVER NOT GRAVELY OUTNUMBERED?
FAIR POINT READY?
READY? THEY INTERRUPTED MY STEW!
NO ONE INTERRUPTS MY STEW AND LIVES!
THESE DESERT BEASTS ARE A RUTHLESS, CRAZED BUNCH. THEY WILL FIGHT TO THE DEATH
THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES.
CLANG

BEHIND YOU!
I TRUST MORK AND GRUNTOS WITH MY LIFE
HEH! HE WAS RIGHT WHERE I WANTED HIM!
I'M CERTAIN.
MORK WAS ONCE ONE OF THE DEADLIEST OPPONENTS I EVER FACED. WE NEARLY KILLED EACH OTHER A DOZEN TIMES OVER.
EVENTUALLY, WE FOUND A NEW CAUSE. I HAVE TRUSTED HIM WITH MY LIFE EVER SINCE
FOR THIS, I AM GLAD. MORK IS ALWAYS STUDYING HIS OPPONENTS. I'M CERTAIN BY NOW HE COULD DEFEAT ME WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.
SKREEE!

GRUNTOS STARTED OUR QUEST LONG BEFORE MERK OR I. HE SOUGHT US OUT WHEN HE HEARD WE SHARED THE SAME MISSION.
HA! TOO SLOW!
CHUNK
HA! DON'T CARE!
AT FIRST I REJECTED HIM, THINKING HIM A BUFFOON.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
YET HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SHOW UP, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I REBUFFED HIM
WHAM
HE ONLY HAD TO SAVE MY LIFE A COUPLE TIMES BEFORE I SAW HIM FOR WHAT HE TRULY IS...
ONE OF THE MOST GIFTED FIGHTERS I HAVE EVER KNOWN.
WE'RE JUST STARTING TO HAVE FUN!

THIS IS OUR LIFE FOREVER DESPISED, FOREVER HUNTED
KRASH
GRAH!
SLINK
ALL BECAUSE HE WILL NOT FIGHT A POINTLESS WAR THAT CONSUMES OUR RACE.
HA! YOU'RE A TENACIOUS HARD-HEADED CREATURE, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
I KNOW.
THOCK
I WOULD NOT HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.

I THOUGHT HE'D HAVE WON BY NOW.
YOU CAN'T HEAD-BUTT YOUR WAY OUT OF ALL OUR PROBLEMS, YORN
WELL, MY FRIENDS... ANY LAST WORDS?
IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO BATTLE ALONGSIDE YOU BOTH.
THRAK-NAK BORN LOUGH
EEEE-
THE CALL
-WE'LL MISS IT
GUH.

I DO NOT FEAR THE DAY I DIE.
I HAVE MY FATHER'S WORDS TO THANK FOR THAT.
OH GLORY.
POWERED.
FLIGHT ENABLED. LAUNCH.
YET I AM NOT A BEAST WITHOUT FEAR
I FEAR THE DAY WHEN WE FIND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR...
...THE DREAD WEAPONS
FOOM
WITH THEM WE WILL HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THIS ENDLESS WAR
I FEAR THAT DAY BECAUSE I DO NOT KNOW IF I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.
I TRY TO SWALLOW THIS FEAR
BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT DAY, THE DAY WHERE I FIND THE DREAD WEAPONS...
...SHERE.
SEE MORE AT BATTLEBEAST.COM!

HEAVY METAL & THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE PRESENT:

WHAT IS YOUR VISION OF WAR?

#7. Stacy Teague Jarava

#6. Russ Wiebe

#5. Nick Marandola

#4. Jose Gomez

HEAVY METAL

TOP 7 ART CONTEST WINNERS

#3. Michael J. Mangano

#1. GRAND PRIZE WINNER
Kevin Molen

#2. Matthew Felix Lostaunau

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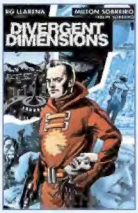

GRAB YOUR PIECE OF THE ACTION:
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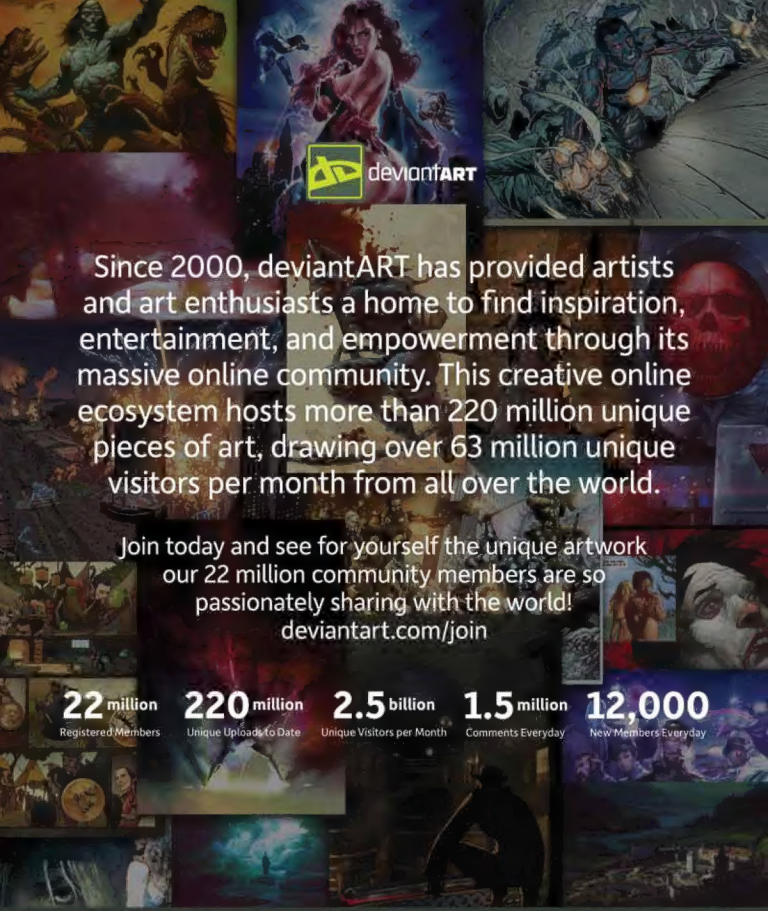
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While you're there,
check out Kevin's page:

kevineastman.deviantart.com